



## LAND AND MOTHERLAND

*by the same Author*



THE CAUSES OF PEACE AND WAR  
THE WHEEL OF HEALTH  
THE RESTORATION OF THE PEASANTRIES  
RECONSTRUCTION BY WAY OF THE SOIL

# LAND AND MOTHERLAND

Eighteen Talks  
on the Indian Question

by  
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## PREFACE

**T**hese eighteen talks are not political, but, dealing with the more permanent characters of peoples, they belong to what Canon Demant has conveniently called 'prepolitics'

Prepolitics underlie politics, and, though they may be swamped by them at a time of great political excitement, they are not to be denied, but inevitably take charge of eventual results. Prepolitics are, in particular, obscured or discarded by democratic politics, because of what Grote, the famous historian of Greece and himself a champion of democracies, described as, 'their habit of treating public affairs in multitudinous assemblages, the well-known effect of which is to inflame sentiment in everyman's bosom by mere contact with a sympathizing circle of neighbours'. Grote called this 'a defect', and he went on to say that the defect 'belongs, of course, to all exercise of power by numerous bodies, especially when the character of the people, instead of being comparatively sedate and slow to move, like the English, is quick, irrepressible and fiery, like Greeks and Italians.'

The modernized, urban Indians, mostly Hindus, under the directions of their orators and press, are quick, irrepressible and fiery, consequently the prepolitician has to turn elsewhere for the staid and slow-to-move factor in India

This factor is, of course, provided by the villagers of India's seven hundred thousand villages. They form the

durable foundations of India, and it is for them that these discussions were devised. The fact that they form eighty per cent of the population and number over three hundred million souls, enforces the prepolitician to give them an instructed and earnest study. They have lived century by century under the same conditions and this has provided them with roots that are deep in the Land. Hence the Land heads the title of this book.

It is, therefore, I think, advisable for me, in this unusual attempt to present the reader with prepolitics, to give beforehand a brief summary of the Talks.

The first Talk deals with the dominant people of the last one and a half centuries, the English, and it begins with them as a well-defined and unique people in Engleland some two thousand years ago. The uniqueness of their character lay in their small family social system and in the qualities which it expressed and preserved, and which still exist at the present day. In England itself through nine centuries of a like faith and language and freedom from foreign invasion the English, with their small family system and its corollary of individualities, have become a people with an unequalled feeling for and understanding of each other. Hence in an eminent degree they have the civic sense. They are a whole, a united and similar people.

The second Talk is concerned with the Indian people of the large family social system under the headship of the priests whose dominant doctrine of Maya or the illusion of the phenomena of life is outside the scope of the practical English. This fundamental difference is illustrated in this Talk by the attitude of the two peoples to war. The English face war with the unity of a whole people whereas under the Indian values the vast majority have had and still have no concern with war. They have lived and still live without taking any share in war or being indifferent to it even when it is so embracing as to be termed a world war.

The six Talks from the third to the eighth, relate a large number of homely and sometimes comical illustrations of the difficulties of the English and Indians in understanding one another, and of the ever-present but disguised antipathy of the Indians to western civilization and of the like antipathy of the English to the apathy of the Indians to their most cherished beliefs. These simple illustrations lead the reader, by a familiarity with the small, to a comprehension of like differences in larger matters.

The remaining ten Talks can be divided into two groups of five. The first group expounds the essential characteristics and the values that created them of the three largest peasantries of the world, the Chinese, the Russian, and the Indian. It describes the profound differences between them and the impossibility of one adopting the system of either of the others owing to the roots that are peculiar to each.

The last five Talks, constituting the second group, discuss the advancement of Indians to modernism by practices according with their character. They are, in short, practices based upon prepolitics.

But, the reader may well exclaim, what has this to do with the English, if they hand over government to Indians? My reply is that, for that very reason, true English assistance to India is given especial opportunities. As long as the relation of the English to the Indians was that of dominance, the civic sense of the English was too frequently baffled. Dominance tends to dictate without consideration of the essential character of the dominated. Those who 'insist on making Anglo-Saxons of the Hindus'—the phrase is taken from the letter of Sir Thomas Munro to Canning in 1821—will no longer be able to enforce their idealism. When the 'irrepressible and fiery' period of winning self-government is over, unless India is to disintegrate as it did after the fall of the Moghul power, the new men of authority will discover that their most needed import from overseas will be the



I do not think so he went on. If we look at the picture as a whole, we are mainly concerned with two groups of people only—the British and the Indian I propose to take the British first.

Knowing by these words that my friend, who was considerably older and wiser than myself was settled for a discourse, I sat back in my chair and gazed at the sparkling stars of a cloudless Indian night, and so prepared myself to listen and later to recall and transcribe what he said.

I shall first take the British or English as I prefer to call them when we discuss origins, for—— and once more he drew my eyes to his by his tone of severity I intend to go back as far as possible to the very roots

Let us begin then at 1066, when William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings, I interjected with a laugh for being young I am inclined to laughster

My friend was good enough to indulge me with a laugh as well, but it was not the rather formidable boom that broke from him when he was really amused.

The date of A D 1066 is a good deal more significant than you suppose, he said but I intend to precede that date by some few centuries. I will begin with the little neck of land between the North Sea and the Baltic which was at that distant date known as Aegle or Engleland the land of the Angles or English. That is where the English who constitute one factor of our question first became defined. They were a Nordic or Northern people and they were particularists.

He paused but as I did not know what particularists meant I kept silent. He read the blankness of my face and changed his tactics to explain it.

I must not indulge in technical jargon he said. The Saxons and English were people who lived in small family groups of parents and children and not in large joint families. That is a far simpler way of stating the simple actual fact about these people. To repeat they were people who lived

in small, and not in the customary large families, and this fact, strangely enough, is of immense significance in the Indian question

‘Henri de Tourville wrote a very illuminating history of these people, in which he attributed their small-family habit to the fact that they went further north than other Teutonic peoples. They reached the comparatively flat country of Sweden and continued westwards into mountainous Norway, with its numerous inlets of the sea. Along these inlets or fiords they found patches of fertile land, and there were abundant fish. Here was ideal country for a people who wished to found homes free from disturbance and to preserve the independence which was so dear to them. The only defect of their settlements was the smallness of the patches of cultivable land between the steep mountain and the sea-water of the fiords. There was not room for local expansion, and every now and then the younger people had to leave their homes. So the young men and women gathered together, fitted out and stocked their ships and went south, first to populate the southern fiords and then to cross the narrow sea to reach the country now known as Denmark, a part of which at that time became named Engleland or England. They pressed on further south between the rivers of the Ems and Elbe and, in a wide tract across the Ems to the Rhine, to establish the land of the Saxons.

‘Even when these people of the fiords had more land, they preserved their original small-family character. When some of them finally reached Britain and, driving out the Britons, settled in the south and east of the island, they still maintained their small-family character and their passion for freedom and independence. “They live apart,” the Roman Tacitus wrote of them, “each by himself, as woodside, plain or fresh spring attracts him,”

‘These migrators by sea and land required daring and they were distinguished for their courage. At times of war they

banded together kinsman ranging himself with kinsman, under the most suitable leader of their choice, but with their object secured, their chief desire was to cultivate the lands they had acquired in peace and independence. But in war they were indomitable warriors. Throughout their history in Britain they have stubbornly maintained their small family character and, until the time of trade and factory the whole of what became known as England was a land of small families living upon the soil and eschewing cities.

Thus, looking back, say for some two thousand years, this remarkable people was distinguished by its small families, its passion for freedom and independence, its intense individualism, its daring, its unyielding character in war for which however it had no innate love and which it readily abandoned when successful war had achieved its immediate purpose. He paused then went on You mentioned the date A.D. 1066 the date of the Conquest of the Anglo-Saxon island of England by the Normans under William the First, as a suitable date from which to begin any discourse on the origins of the English people and I replied that the date was more significant than you perhaps thought.

I was quite sure that you could give it a greater significance, I intervened with humble truth.

My friend smiled and nodded

I trust I can do so he said It is significant for two reasons. Firstly William the Conqueror declared all the conquered land to be the King's not the families and secondly he made gifts of it to his Norman Barons to make sure of their loyalty and armed help against the frequent rebellions of the English. So land was made property the property of a landowner—a very significant change for though the tenacious character of the English eventually once more shared out most of the land between the various families of a community or village and although there still is much in the waste-land or commons, there was in their midst always

a landowner, a lord of the land or manor, who, in the name of the King, regarded the land and villages as his property. The original freedom of the freeholders had to undergo a compromise with the theory of land as property.

Nevertheless, there was a long struggle between the peasants and the lords of the manor, such as did not occur in India. In this struggle the lords gradually gained. They separated and enclosed a part of their land with permanent hedges, while the peasants' fields remained open without hedges. Secondly, a very important addition, they folded the peasants' cattle on their land and thus added the enrichment of manure to their land and deprived the peasants of it. Finally, under the Tudors and in the later part of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century the landowners actually seized a large amount of land that had belonged to the peasants. The peasants' commons were filched from them by Enclosures, and peasants were evicted from their farms, which had been weakened by the theft of manure. Gradually the idea that land was property and belonged to him who seized or bought it became general, and a free peasantry ceased to exist.

'It was at this period, when the conception of land as property became finally paramount, that the English themselves became paramount in India. They brought, therefore, the Conqueror's conception of land as property to India.

'The English small-family system, on the other hand, was never destroyed by the Normans. Even the big landlords followed the habit of the small family. Their land-estates, left by them at their deaths, went to their heirs and not to their families. The eldest son was the heir to all the land, the younger sons had no share. Thus the small family was secured.

'The second significance of the date, 1066, was that from that date onwards, England was never again conquered by any foreign power. She has enjoyed, therefore, an insular

isolation for a period of over 900 years. It is a very remarkable fact of history 900 years in which to be slowly shaped and fashioned! Clearly in the end, we shall have a very definite type of man, a species so to speak all on its own an Englishman.

With this history those, who think upon it, would expect all Englishmen to be very much alike, one land, one language, one faith. So they are, very alike. The Scotch and Welsh, by association, now approximate to them. But the peculiar likeness is essentially English, and it is that likeness in its intense individuality positiveness, and decision which eventually made them such a definite people in the wide world. The English began making themselves worldly notable in Elizabethan days. It was their passion for freedom and independence, that led some of them to resume the daring adventure of their ancestors and seek new homes for themselves in the New World of America. It was their character that carried them and their small family system and their desire only for as much land as they could cultivate, which eventually made them dominant in North America when opposed to the French, who, on their part, announced ownership of territories too vast for them to hold by personal occupation and cultivation. The adventures of the time of Elizabeth the migrations of the Puritans and later of the younger sons of English Estates were all English. They were not Scotch or Welsh. These peoples were still in the raw and secluded within their hells. Both Scotch and Welsh came out of their confinements *because of the English.*

It has been said that, if ten men of character got together when young and were completely loyal to each other throughout life, there is no grade of success that they might not reach. That was, in a national way just what the English were. They were so alike that they understood each other. They were just a definite people whose definiteness amounted to a common will. They would all act in a like manner which

covered any circumstance They did not think, they did not ponder, they did not meditate, they just acted, and the action went through because of their unity in it When their ideal hero, Nelson, flung upon the storm of battle his famous signal "England expects every man to do his duty", it was the English themselves that created this great epitome of their own character. They were then, at Nelson's time, as they have been on many hundreds of other occasions and emergencies, welded together by their will to like action

'Now, in India, will has always been a thing of unique power. Any sort of will has this power The resolute rogue has it and by it he will impose upon his fellow Indians in a way that astounds any Englishman He can profess to all sorts of superhuman and mystical properties, because will has such a mesmerizing effect upon Indians that it overshadows the doctrine accompanying it It is the living, human will to which they bow Even will without force is all-powerful In *Satyagraha*, as you know, an individual renounces material possessions to increase the strength of his will to attain a purpose, *dhurna* is the patient but wilful persistence of the humble to his end This purified, individual will, effecting its ends without force or even action, goes back in the Indian soul to times as distant as the English common-will

'Now perhaps you see why I attach such significance to the date 1066 And the astonishing thing is', and here again he fixed me with a grim eye, 'that you, an Englishman, brought forward the date of 1066 as a joke, as if it could only be pertinent to the question before us in the mind of an old buffer like I am' He took no notice of my attempted protests, but continued, 'You are in this like other Englishmen You do not think, you act You do not consider the immense persistence of racial characteristics as the factor of this question of India

✓ 'Let me, however, not lecture you, but make clear what I

mean. Firstly the English brought to India their conception of land as private property with its harmful effects on a peasantry Secondly they brought the small-family system, with all that it implies its virtues of initiatory will and common character its defect of a narrow humanity both strange to the ascendancy of the family and the subordination of the individual, which characterize a large family system. These differences have caused many misunderstandings between the two peoples, as we shall see.

## II

If you went so far back in time to trace the characteristics of the English, how far back will you go to trace those of Indians?' was the question I put to my friend at the opening of our second talk

'I shall not discuss possible dates,' replied my friend, 'but straight to the point, namely the difference of the values, English and Hindus. In the dim past and in most of India, we find a doctrine and a valuation of life that strike us English as very peculiar, even as incomprehensible. It is both philosophic and profound. It is life as Maya or Illusion. Let me try to define this conception

'The only real or existing thing, says the doctrine, is the universal soul or Atman. Atman lies behind all phenomena, even as one can say clay lies behind the uncountable variety of jars and vessels of clay. As the one final reality of these vessels is clay, so behind life and its infinite variety of phenomena, the one reality is the Atman. This makes all the earthly phenomena, all shapes and forms of things, Maya or Illusion. The phenomenal universe is, therefore, not reality, but Illusion, and the illusion of the universe is due to its being seen, not in terms of its unity and reality, but in terms of individual men's desires. *Chacun à son goût*, each man according to his taste and desire. Only by freeing himself more and more from the ego and its desires, only by get-



ting rid of all personal outlook and action, only by acquiring knowledge of the illusionary and transitory character of the phenomena of life, can a man eventually escape the ceaseless wheel of existence and be in the Atman. Through knowledge he becomes Atman

Now anyone who has lived in India and has sufficient knowledge and sympathy to earn for himself real Indian friendship will know that this conception is as much the medium of Indian thought as the sense of individuality will, and action in this world is the medium of English mentality. Both Indians and English claim to be realists, but the realities of the two are entirely different. The Englishman works for his own and his small family's good and for the advancement of the general good of which they are a part. His thought is occupied with how this can best be done and how he can overcome its difficulties. The Hindu on the other hand is not such an intense believer in life and power over life. He is what the Englishman calls a fatalist. He accepts life as it is without any hope or wish that it will be permanently better. Life has always denoted and always will denote trial and suffering. Only by the acquirement of knowledge that this world is Illusion, can he escape from birth and re birth.

Consequently between the two human types there will be misunderstanding. What is real to the one will not be real to the other and vice versa.

Thus there are two great differences between the English and Hindus—one difference is that between the small family and the large—the other between two forms of reality—the empirical and the metaphysical.

As my friend did not continue I felt myself forced to make some remark. So I put before him the puzzlement I am wont to feel, when confronted with the word metaphysical and feel myself withdrawn from the comforts of the concrete. I therefore asked him the following question

‘Could you help me by giving a concrete example? Could you, for instance, show me how this affects such an attitude to the all-absorbing fact of the present, the war?’

My friend gave a brief shout of laughter. ‘A nasty word, metaphysical, eh?’ he said. ‘But to answer your question, first let me deal with the class of the Hindu leaders of India. After the Great War of 1914–18, what was the attitude of these leaders to war? I have not kept any record of their sayings, so I cannot lay claim to an accuracy confirmed by quotations, but I have acquired the very distinct impression that war, as one of the supreme facts of the western life, was one of indifference to them. It is true that the reality of war receded with dangerous rapidity from the minds of our victor nation. But indifference was only latent, it was the traditional English reversion to peace. The will to war remained potential and, had the people been aware, as they were to become aware, of the scandalous neglect of their Government to maintain an effective fighting force, they would have changed seeming indifference to an angry activity. But the indifference of the Indian leaders was absolute. The national movement was strong. There were numbers of books, magazine articles, newspaper leaders, conferences, and speeches, but never did I read any demand that the non-military character of the students and youths should be given a potential military character by anything as mild as is a volunteer movement. To the leaders, it was as if power could be won and held by talking about rights and democracy; and that the immense power, given by the highly developed art of war in modern times, was a thing of no importance. Presumably, if they thought of it at all they thought of it still as the department of the King and the *Khatriyas*, the speciality of a ruler and a caste. They showed no sense that it had become national, and they ignored it, leaving it entirely in the hands of the successors to the *Khatriyas*, the military departments of Government. War and the fighting

spirit were not, in fact, *realities to them*. Hence no articles no outcry for the training of college students, no volunteer movement.

So much for the Indian leaders. With the Indian peasants and townsfolk it was the same, excepting particularly the men of the Punjab the province in which the warlike invaders of India have again and again implanted a fighting spirit. Of the peasants, the following story of their complete indifference to war though it is from Madras, could be expected in almost any part of India. After the German *Emden's* attack upon Madras City some peasants conversing with an itinerant official asked him what the new governors were like were they better or worse than the old ones? On further inquiry the official discovered that the peasants believed that the Germans had become rulers in place of the British owing to a battle that had occurred in Madras City. To the war and the change of rulers it produced, they were themselves quite indifferent, except in so far as it led to their casual question.

How do you connect that with the doctrine of Maya? I asked

*Maya* he replied is the doctrine which denies the existence of the empirical universe and became established as a philosophic doctrine at the time of the Upanishads and was foreshadowed long before their time. It still pervades the philosophy of the great mass of the thinkers in India. With such an immense period of ascendancy it naturally damped worldly effort and ignored what is now called progress. Consequently the peasants, who could not be expected to grasp it, were left alone to their quiet life in their villages on the land. They were never forced into the world's affairs they were never made civic or national. Consequently again they were unconcerned with a world war and such a stupendous national event as a change in national rulers. Amongst the English that could not possibly happen. They never think that way

‘Yes, that is quite clear to me now,’ I said

‘The same spirit is seen now amongst all the non-military Indians. To war, as most nations view it, namely something profoundly affecting their national liberty, the Indian mass is, with the exception of the owners of large properties, indifferent. You may say it is the result of alien rulers. But it is much more than that. It is something that, long before the British period, made alien rule over teeming millions so easy. *Maya* is itself a doctrine which I could believe to be true in the highest intellectual sense and which many men tend to realize in part as death approaches. It was the doctrine of the Brahmins, the intellectual caste that took upon itself the guidance of this vast people. They have been the paramount factor in the values and social life of India, and their separation of the Indian people from war has been effective through the centuries and is still strikingly evident. There is, indeed, in the mental outfit of no other great people so small a place for the drama and tragedy of war. Its vast meaning to nations and peoples is outside the traditional ambits of their minds, and the resulting attitude to war is not modern but of the “olds”’

Here my friend rose and we parted, he to his books and I to my bungalow and bed

### III

**A**t our last meeting I said you gave me an illuminating discourse on the indifferentism of the Indian mass to war

Indifference was the word I used said my friend with a smile.

I prefer the word indifferentism, I replied boldly It implies a systematic indifference.

Perhaps it is better in this connection, he acquiesced though I prefer simple words.

You confined yourself to indifferentism to war Can you please give me a more general conception of this attitude of the Indians to the West?

I have a tag for it, he replied I call it the Yes No Combine This yes no combine towards Western civilization is fundamental to the Indians It soaks their minds as their blood soaks their bodies Prick them and their blood appears Make a Western demand upon them and this combine appears And a great number of such demands are of course, made, for one fact is certain that in material, scientific, and mechanical power the West is so much the stronger that any open resistance to it is almost impossible. Nevertheless, make a Western demand on them to their advantage and their antipathy to its compulsive character shows itself in the yes-no combine I will now give you some simple examples on our present theme

‘I have a particular friend amongst the landlords here, who for some years was the President of the Municipality. So, as the leading citizen, head of a large family and with many business interests, he had plenty to do to fill his days. Yet, on every morning without fail, he gave two hours to his ablutions and prayers

‘There was a good deal of malaria in the town then and I set myself to get a mosquito brigade established With the leader of the Municipality as my friend and with many brave speeches from the Councillors about the necessity of the highest grade of public health, we created the Brigade

‘My friend, the President, then, did all that was necessary publicly to forward the activities of the brigade and to help it to overcome the inertia of the populace In this way he uttered a valiant Yes Nevertheless, with my substantial faith in the yes-no combine, I was not a bit surprised, when I visited him, to find plenty of mosquitoes in his house I took an opportunity to see the wired-in cupboards where the food was kept, the four short legs of which stood within circular trays of water to keep out the hordes of hungry ants The water of the trays was alive with the larvae of mosquitoes It was clear that the mosquito brigade, composed of humbler citizens, either had not ventured to visit the house of their boss, or, if they had visited it, had not presumed to point out his neglect The President himself apparently did not trouble at all about larvae or winged insects So, with his public Yes, he combined his private No

‘I left his house, also without saying anything which might savour of a rebuke, and, on my way home, visited his family doctor to report what I had found The doctor kept some water in a tall, glass cylinder for an instrument called a urinometer In this I saw some wriggling objects I asked the doctor what they were He told me that they were mosquito larvae and went on to give me a learned disquisition on mosquitoes as the cause of malaria That was his Yes, but

his jug was his private No. He seemed unconscious of their incongruity.

What one sees in little has a collective strength of immeasurable magnitude. There is no Englishman in no official or civil job who does not perpetually suffer from the frequent examples of this yes-no combine. Being, however, English and not therefore given to subtle analysis, he is apt angrily to put it down to a peculiar capacity for lying on the part of the Indian. But the Indian is no more a liar in this than is a child trying to excuse some, to him, natural action or expression, for which he has been blamed by an adult. Indeed the Indian's yes-no combine to the West is allied to the attitude of the child to an adult. The adult lives in a world that quite outstrips the child's ambit and capacity and, hence, with unimaginative parents and nurses, the child finds itself living in a sea of miscomprehension only to be escaped from by indifference. The Indian in relation to the West, is in a like situation. The speed and power of the modern world has outstripped his capacity. His world is not built upon the constitution of the atom or the qualities of ions. Nevertheless, the Indian's attitude is much more than a mere negative. It is, I repeat, a mental position, an absorption in the supremacy of the metaphysical over the material values. The most honoured end of the orthodox Hindu, whose sons are old enough to conduct his worldly affairs and to care for the family, is for him to obaodoo the world's unreal phenomena. He leaves his family and lives a life of simplicity and solitude, begging his food by presenting a dish, into which pious donors place what they can spare. He is no longer in the world of affairs, but, after the rich and varied experience of his life, comes down at last to the great Hindu reality—that of the ultimate vanity of life and freedom from its illusion. This, so utterly different from the demanding and commanding materialism of the West, is, in its diffusiveness, the cause of the clerk or workman's curious lapses in carrying out Western

work, the promised letter, which never gets written, the thorough cleansing of a machine, which is left half done or not at all, the sense of the Westerner's pride in his machine being lacking I could give hundreds of examples of this yes-no combine, until I drove you out of the room with boredom.

'I trust, however, you will bear with one more example, and I ask you to do so on the grounds that the personage concerned in it is the very top of the pyramid or the very centre of the web of Hindu reaction to the West. I use the word web, because so many unwitting Englishmen and officials allow themselves to be caught in it

'This top of the pyramid is, of course, none other than Mahatma Gandhi. He is the perfect artist of the yes-no combine. I have read many articles of his in daily papers and in his own paper, the *Harijan*. I have never been under any difficulty in detecting their art. It is sublimely simple and thoroughly understood by his Indian readers. It is so simple, so naive, so candid, that a great number of sentimentalists, British and American, have been enmeshed by it.

'If an article, as was frequently the case, was concerned with Government, Mr. Gandhi would begin with Yes-yes. He would praise the good *intention* of the Government, and the reader would be led to feel that Mr. Gandhi thoroughly appreciated this quality in the Government. Having created this atmosphere of appreciation and understanding, Mr. Gandhi would, in the second part of the article, show how entirely wrong was the *action*, which the Government had taken. It meant well but acted wrongly, so wrongly that there was nothing for an honest friend to do but oppose it, not tooth and nail, but by true, traditional Indian opposition, *dharma* or patient but persistent resistance of the humble, *ahimsa* the avoidance of violence, and *satyagraha*, the increase of soul-force. The religious character of this opposition baffled many British and Americans, who are accustomed to regard any exhibition of religion with awe.



At the Round Table Conference, Mr Gandhi held himself aloof from the debate on the army and defence, because he thought India did not require an army at all. When the present war broke out, Mr Gandhi at first taught unconditional support of the British and satisfied them that he agreed that Indian independence depended on a British victory. This seemed reasonable and comforting to the British. But he soon followed this yes-yes with a very puzzling no-no when he announced that he believed he and his followers could themselves conquer the Japanese by *satyagraha* or soul force. To be ready for this achievement, he ordered seven provincial Congress governments to resign, which they did. He rejected the Cripps proposals, which promised India freedom like that of Canada and Australia after the war and in August 1942, he sent a note to the Indian Congress Committee, in which he demanded the withdrawal of the British Indian Government, its troops and the American troops, and said that the consequent invasion of the Japanese should be met with and overcome by non-violent resistance or *ahimsa*. In brief Mr Gandhi believed not in the force of armaments, but in that of the soul.

Mr Gandhi believes in the soul. So does the Englishman, but certainly not to the same extent, for when the Englishman is at war with a very dangerous enemy he drops his faith in the soul, or hands it over to the Bishops and Archbishops to do what they can with it, and trusts to the well armed body. Mr Gandhi's attitude opened out the gulf between the Indian and the West as never before. And although the more statesmanlike mind of Mr Jawaharlal Nehru saved the face of Congress, nevertheless a very large part of India followed Mr Gandhi. "Quit India" was painted on a number of walls and greeted the puzzled Briton as he drove past this public announcement in his motor-car. The Government, for reasons that it later disclosed involving a movement to sabotage railways and other "war assets" while

the Japanese were at the gates of India, acted with swift decision. Mr. Gandhi's original yes-yes had now turned to a dangerous no-no. All prominent Congress leaders were surprised, arrested and imprisoned, the danger was brought to an end and eventually the Japanese were driven from Indian soil. The practical sense of the British recovered itself, and Indians were saved from a try-out of the individual virtues of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* against a Japanese conquest, the character of which has been amply revealed in the many countries in which it has temporarily succeeded. The whole story will, however, live as the consummation of the yes-no combine '.

## IV

On the next occasion on which I visited my friend, he was obviously in bad humour. He so growled his welcome, that I hesitated for a minute or two to speak. He filled the gap himself by saying "You find me grumpy I am grumpy I am exasperated at the obtuseness of my fellow countrymen in this Oriental land."

I sensed that something good would follow for no-one could be more entertaining and often amusing than my friend, when his irony was provoked. His opening sentences were, however quite surprising. He broke into a eulogy not an irony of the British.

The British he said, have the civic sense in greater measure than any other people in the world. It is to this above all that they owe their astonishing success in India but and the exasperated tone revived with a glare of anger at the only other Briton present, myself why is it that you or so few of you ever go a little further and surpass this sense with your consciousness of its dangers and limitations?

I did not know how to reply so I said humbly "Expose my fault, dear sir and I promise you such amendment as I can."

He became a little more accommodating after this answer and gave me a growl of approval. "You are better than most so I will tell you what I mean."

‘We will start with the trifle that aroused my wrath. I was at the counter of the Club office. That pleasant clerk was there, Dayaram, the one with the small black moustache.’

‘I know. I like him. He is courteous and friendly by nature.’

‘That is so,’ went on my friend, ‘and it is this quality of his that an Englishman, worthy of his Empire, should cultivate and bring forth. John Barlow was at the office getting an air-mail letter stamped with a fourteen anna stamp. “See that you stick it well,” he said quite nicely, and Dayaram in his zeal to please, licked the stamp and brought his fist so vigorously down on it, that it slipped and a part of it projected forlornly beyond the edge of the envelope. There followed a torrent of abuse from Barlow. At this outbreak I reached for the envelope, readjusted the stamp before it was dry and handed it to Barlow.

“Adjusting the fault should, I think, precede any torrent of wrath. Otherwise you will have to soak off the stamp and refix it with paste,” I said.

‘John Barlow took my rebuke well and thanked me, as he held the now properly stamped letter.’

“I am obliged to you,” he said. “This damned weather gets me.”

‘He nodded to Dayaram. “Thanks all the same, but you should by now know how to fit a sticky stamp to an envelope without trying to smash the counter.”’

‘We all three laughed and the incident closed. The chief rancour that was left, I surmise, was in myself.’

‘It was for rather a small reason,’ I ventured to assert.

‘A click of a hammer on a cap will release a bullet, if an explosive is stored behind it,’ replied my friend. ‘I have within me a powder of unused explosive, when I witness, not Dayaram’s lack of adjustment to such a Western gadget as a stamp, but the failure of John Barlow to realize Dayaram’s lack of civic sense. John comes from England, where urban

life, in particular has produced a great number of gadgets, to which he automatically responds. By these and more weighty adjustments he reveals his civic sense. Every Englishman knows them and the part they take in making civic actions smooth and speedy. It is not so with the Indian. He possesses, as yet, little or no civic sense. I will give you a few more illustrations.

Let us accompany Dayaram to his home. We shall find he lives in the Old Town as we call the original Indian town with its narrow crowded streets. You will find with familiarity that the Old Town possesses the character of a collection of employment castes and villages. The different communities live gathered together in their own quarters of the town. You will find the makers and sellers of brass utensils in one quarter with their shops shoulder to shoulder. The dealers in grains will be in another, the dealers in sweetmeats with their local clouds of flies, in another, the men of some outlying provincial town, the Birminghamites we will call them, in another. You know this. I have myself been in old Indian towns, where the streets of a community actually have gates which used to be closed at night. These towns lodge the communal sense, not the civic sense.

Now watch these people cross the wide, English made modern road. The Hastings Road here is such a road. It was planned as a straight, wide street along the straggling western border of the Old Town. To make it straight, many projections of the Old Town had originally to be cut away. The result was our fine highway Hastings Road with its modern traffic of motors, horse-gharries, camel carts, donkey trolleys and bicyclists.

I have, myself on innumerable occasions watched our Indian fellow citizens cross this road. Educated Indians, rich Indians, poor Indians, coolies carrying burdens, practically all cross the road in the same way and that way is the expansion of their way of crossing the narrow lanes of the

Old Town There they just start across, fill gaps in the traffic and so get across As the traffic is quite slow in old towns, this method is quite reasonable and successful

'To cross the Hastings Road, however, they adopt the same method They do not look left and right, but start straight off as if their own particular purpose were the only thing concerned and as if there was no such thing as an interrelated traffic, but only gaps As the Hastings Road is not so crowded as the Strand, they usually get to the other side without adventure. But sometimes their direct route is interfered with by the relatively swifter traffic and then the gap-filling game begins.

'The general procedure is as follows An Indian chauffeur, as intent as is the pedestrian on pursuing his own purpose to the last moment, seeing the obstacle in front of him, hoots, swerves, and avoids what seems to the uninitiated a certain catastrophe A gharry driver will jerk back his ill-fed horse so that it collapses against its vehicle like a closing concertina, to elongate again when the danger is over The pedestrian, at the last moment also, avoids the immediate accident with a movement that disregards any neighbouring traffic. Coolies, carrying loads upon the head, start at a trot and continue by a passage, which opens up miraculously like a crack in an icefloc, until they reach the other side Small boys frequently make a direct run for it Bicyclists come in from side roads, often at full tilt, and pirouette to safety with really admirable skill One and all pursue their own particular ends, without gauging their relation to the purposes of other citizens In brief, they have no civic sense I believe in large towns, like Bombay and Calcutta, things are better, but our town, as you know, is only of average size '

My friend paused, and watched my smiling face As he was on his feet and illustrated his description with lively movements to indicate the various motions of adjustment, I was highly entertained He is a master of mimicry and once or

twice I was forced to an outburst of laughter in which he now having worked himself into a genial mood joined with an occasional deep guffaw. He has a particularly deep strong voice which rolls along rapidly in description, and in which his guffaw comes, not as an interruption, but as a larger wave.

I will now revert to the gadgets, he continued. I have an objection to verandas in bungalows. They make the rooms so dark and I have always objected to darkness in rooms more than heat. So although verandas do keep the rooms cooler, I had my small bungalow built with the windows of the rooms in the outer walls of the house. All these windows are double, as they are in many European towns. The inner windows are glass-paned and can be closed when the heat is great. The outer windows are fitted with Venetian blinds.

The wind here is, as you know sometimes scorchingly hot and sometimes laden with dust. At such times the glass windows are closed and the Venetian windows are flattened and bolted on to the outer wall. But when the cool and powerful monsoon wind blows the Venetians are a great advantage. They let in wind and light and keep out the sun. So the arrangement was apparently perfect, but for one fault. The Venetian windows were not perfectly made, and when the monsoon blows lustily the slats are apt to close with a bang. So to overcome this I had wooden wedges made to push in between the slats and keep them open. Now though I have faithful and willing servants, incredible though it may seem, I have never been able to get them to grasp the principle of the wedges. They cannot distinguish between the thick end and the thin. The difference is not obvious to them as it is to us and left to themselves they frequently force the space between the slats and insert the thicker end. With prolonged and troublesome tuition, I earned only partial success. It was not until I had the smaller end of the





# V

**Y**ou had promised to give me more instances of the difficulty of the Indian in adopting or even understanding Western methods, I said at our next meeting. I pray you to give me some.

*You must know quite a number yourself* he answered  
It is impossible to avoid experiencing them.

Yes I do but somehow when challenged I cannot call to mind apt instances as you do

I remember and note them down as a necessary way of knowing something important to the Indian question, said my friend. I like to pass from the small & they are really one.

One day I visited the Electric Co continued where there happens a copper gauze. I asked the manager told me it was constructed so as heavy when mixed. He laughed tell you something that will said the manager "We put of our Indian workmen, who years. Then something through the filter at its account was not nonplussed He took holes in the filter until the

tomed speed They were, of course, drops of mixed oil, and the filter was spoilt You can't rely on these fellows ""

We both enjoyed the story and my friend added 'You see the resemblance of this to the Indian crossing Hastings Road The workman had a purpose to attain and he was locked into that purpose When he found the traffic of his oil was interrupted, all he thought of was to see that his purpose brought him safely to his goal The boring of the holes in the filter brought the happy result and overcame the obstruction to his purpose

'Another example, which occurs to me, is that of an Englishman and his gardener This *sahib* noticed two wooden tubs with jaded palms on either side of the steps leading into the bungalow The tubs themselves, were, if anything, more jaded than the palms and the combination made the *sahib* ashamed So he gave the *mali* a pot of green paint and, pointing to the tubs, told him to paint them before he returned in the evening When the master returned what was his astonishment to see that the jaded palm leaves had assumed the appearance of spring They glittered with a rich and refreshing green in striking contrast to the unchanged shabbiness of the tubs The *sahib* had, no doubt, seemed mad to the *mali*, but he had to be obeyed, and now the *mali* seemed mad to the *sahib*

'Then there is the hoary chestnut of the railway employee at Lahore An Englishman observed an elderly coolie one day striking the wheels of a train, with the presumed object of hearing them ring true Some years later, he again had occasion to notice the same old man hitting the wheels with his hammer

"'Hallo, Mustapha," he cried, "how long have you been at this work?" Mustapha's face broke into a broad smile at being recognized "It is twenty years, *sahib*, and may be thirty years I forget now when I began " "And why do you hit the wheels with your hammer?" asked the *sahib* "That

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'One day I visited the Electric Power House my friend continued, where there happens to be a filter made of copper gauze. I asked the manager what it exactly was. He told me it was constructed so as to separate light oils from heavy when mixed. He laughed at a memory of his. I will tell you something that will amuse you about that filter" said the manager. "We put the filter in the charge of one of our Indian workmen, who worked it for three and a half years. Then something happened the light oil failed to drip through the filter at its accustomed speed. Our workman was not nonplussed. He took a gimlet and bored a few small holes in the filter until the drops of oil fell at their accus-

tomed speed They were, of course, drops of mixed oil, and the filter was spoilt You can't rely on these fellows ”

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I do not know replied Mustapha "but the *Sircar* (the Government) told me to do so and I have obeyed. He drew his wan figure up with no little pride and added "So you see, *sahib* in me, Mustapha, a faithful servant "

Recently continued my friend, I was watching an Indian at work on reinforced concrete. He was laying the rods with the greatest care I asked him to show me the next step in the process, the laying of the concrete itself I have no particular knowledge of the art required, but I presumed that he would start at the centre. Thus indeed he did, but this is what he did not do. He did not protect the alignment of the rods which I had seen him effect with such care and skill. He did not put a plank on rests to bridge over them and step on this bridge. No he stepped lightly on the rods to get to the centre and, so doing, unquestionably marred their alignment. He had passed from one purpose to another and was confined first by the one and then by the other as separate things. He did not associate the two. Again I wish you to note how similar this is to the way in which he would cross our Hastings Road. In doing so he would not plan out his passage according to an observation of the traffic but would start off into the road and meet each difficulty separately as it appeared.

It is the same with the artisans in this place. I go to a *mistri* (carpenter) and ask him to make me a piece of furniture. Considering the simplicity of his tools and other equipment, he does it astonishingly well. Encouraged I ask him to make a rough crate, and am surprised that he cannot do it. It is certainly not skill that he lacks. That he has shown to me in his furniture. It is something else. He cannot apply the *principles of carpentry* which he used in making the furniture to what seems to me a simpler application of them. He is locked in by his customary habit and tradition. He lacks the enlarging initiative. He is limited even to this day by the confinement of caste. Sometimes I feel, said my friend

with a fierce glare straight into my eye and a loudening of his voice 'that caste itself is the right measure and the proper setting for his intellect'

'What about education?' He only needs education,' I intervened

'No,' he cried 'If you were observant, you would see the same feature in education. In Indian teaching or education, which was and is in the hands of the priests, long passages of sacred writing have to be learnt by heart. A Muslim scholar of distinction will learn the whole of the Koran by heart, and Hindus have like memories

'In spite of your recent remark, you must have observed that our local students still follow this method of learning by heart, a sort of exact mental copying of what is taught. They can reel out what they have learnt by this method with such facility that the representative Briton is apt to think that they know their knowledge well in his sense. It is something that opens up the mind and enables it, in the original meaning of the word educate, to lead a pupil forth into a general understanding and enlargement of the subject itself and things akin to it. He will learn how to act correctly, not only in the exact-application of the immediate knowledge of what he has learnt, but by association and its spread to other fields of grey matter to what one might call his general field of understanding. Not so the Indian pupil. He looks upon what the lecturer says as something to be learnt by heart without any outside association. The fact that he is apt to complain of a British lecturer, who speaks too fast for him to write all that he hears, is proof of this. He likes the teacher, who himself writes his teaching upon the blackboard. Then he, too, can write it down and, with his excellent memory, learn it by heart. He is locked in by his purpose of learning the particular lesson that is given to him, and other knowledge is locked out. It is a traditional method, the method his ancestors followed. But it is a tradi-

tion which is relative to a period, when the bulk of *material* knowledge, compared to that of modern times, was almost microscopical in its dimensions, and when the teaching, confined largely to sacred writings, was essentially *non-material* and metaphysical.

So the Indian pupil takes his education bit by bit in the same way as he crosses a modern road, and the same observation, which I chanced to make upon the artisan, applies to him. No sir education does not, except in rare cases, release the Indian pupil, as one might expect and certainly as the earnest, representative Briton wrongly believes it to do

With that, my friend bade me good night.

## VI

**Y**ou have used, sir, a rather tempting term, "representative Briton" Pray tell me why you adopt this special appellation, which I take to denote what one might call the average Englishman '

'Or Scotchman,' interpolated my friend with a smile

'Or Briton, since that is your word,' I added

'Yes,' he replied, 'I like the correct word And Briton is the right one and to it I add the adjective "representative", as describing the Britons who are, so to speak, the delegates of their homeland in India, and remain delegates for the whole period of their sojourn in India

'The representative Briton', he went on, 'is one who likes to live well within the present He likes to be busy When he is not busy, he likes exercising his body, and, after he has exercised his body, he likes social diversions, or light reading such as that which is offered by the papers, the magazines and novels, especially of the detective variety But it is rare for him to care for studentship and the understanding it brings' He rose to his feet and stood over me, as was a habit of his when he was about to enunciate a particular truth 'It has, for this reason, long been a favourite dictum of my thought,' he said, waving an extended index finger at me, like a conductor's baton, 'that, whatever a Briton, experienced or otherwise, first thinks instinctively on any



Indian question is sure to be wrong.' With this he resumed his seat and paused, as if he were debating in his mind how to proceed.

My explanation is somewhat lengthy but I believe it to be necessary. Apart from the material and metaphysical difference we have already discussed the chief reason why our representative Briton at first and mostly throughout his career *thinks wrong* is the *Time-gap* between Briton and Indian. The only way to bridge this gap is studentship observation, meditation, and imagination. It is, however these accomplishments that the representative Briton lacks. He is essentially not a student. He is a man of character of energy of force, of will, interested in the present and not in the past, interested within the scope of *his own experience* but not outside it. He is, in short, the very opposite of the meditative student, who strives to extend his knowledge far beyond his own sphere of experience.

There was a time when the Briton had not a national civic sense such as he has to-day. There was a time when villages, for example, were hostile to their neighbours. But a history of nine centuries upon an island never subjected to invasion has, as I have already pointed out provided the representative Briton with a remarkable civic sense. This has especially been so in England in which, as you will at once see upon a physical map of Britain communications were much easier than they were in mountainous Scotland and Wales.

Consequently with one language and fundamentally one faith Englishmen developed a considerable familiarity to each other so that the thoughts and conduct of one were in general adjusted to the thoughts and conduct of the whole. One may say that this began to be well marked in Elizabethan England. It went through a number of ups and downs but the national civic sense has, nevertheless throughout the last four centuries been definite. The only people who showed a similar national sense was that of another

invaded island, the Japanese, who, during the period of Tokugawa Shogunate, preceding their modern Meiji period, exhibited a highly developed national, civic sense for a space of two and a half centuries

‘It is this civic sense that produces reliable civic action in the Briton. It is this reliability which has created the Argentine solemn asseveration of truth “*palabra de un Ingles*” (on the word of an Englishman). It is the cause of the Briton’s strength, the force of his will, and enables one Briton to understand and trust the principles of conduct of another. Even in the most isolated positions, a Briton will be representative of the rest. When things go awry, he will not panic, but will act as he is expected to act. He will do his duty. In short, I repeat, the representative Briton civically is a very reliable man.

‘This is not the case of the Indians. In India, the civic sense, as the cohesive and adjusting sense of a people as a whole, has as yet been hardly at all attained. Indians are, even to-day, divided into communities. They have not reached the civic sense, and it is for this reason that they are no more able to understand the Britons than the Britons are to understand them. The Britons, indeed, having passed through the state of India and reached a later development, ought to be able to understand the Indians by recalling their own past. But there is not within the Indians that which is capable of understanding the Britons. They have often appreciated the practical advantages which a civic government has brought to them, and large sections of Indians have, indeed, preferred to live in British India to living in the Native States because of the advantages of peace, social order, and freedom to trade openly, which they can there enjoy.

‘The Briton, then, lives relatively in a more advanced civic time than the Indian, and, for him to understand the Indian, he has to bend his imagination backwards and acquire know-

ledge of his own past. Thus the representative Briton does not do. But exceptional Britons do it, and understand. As outstanding examples of the exceptional were the four M's as I like to call them: Munro, Malcolm, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and Metcalfe, to whom I willingly add Warren Hastings. They were essentially objective, not subjective men: they could understand the thoughts and principles of other peoples than their own. Read the famous letter of Hastings to the Lord Chief Justice of England dated the 21st of March, 1774. The British Parliament had proposed to prepare a judicial code for Bengal based on the *British* judicial code. Hastings opposed this. He championed the native system of the pundits, revered by the Bengal people, to the British law: its exactitudes, its niceties, its delays, its technicalities, and its sense of equality, all antagonistic to the Indian character." and later events came to his support, for subjective British officials discovered by experience that of all the factors of their new government the law and law-court were by the Indians the most abhorred. Hastings in his objectivity, in his complete familiarity with the court language and the vernaculars of the people, in his friendly patronage of Indian scholars, in his translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was, said Lord Curzon, almost the only one of the British rulers (governor generals) of India, who took a real interest in literature, scholarship and the arts. He was adored by his officials and "enjoyed among the natives" wrote hostile Macaulay, "a popularity such as other governors have perhaps better merited, but such as no other governor has been able to attain."

Munro was attached to India for forty-seven years with but two spells in England of which one was however for six years. His *Minutes* should be classics given to all who proceed to India, but as far as I know to-day are only to be found in special libraries. What could exhibit the profound insight of objective genius better than his statement

“In India, whoever regulates the assessment of the land-rent, holds in his hand the mainspring of the peace of the country” What saying has ever been more thoroughly substantiated by its opposite, the *Permanent Settlement* of Cornwallis, to which Munro was so bitterly opposed? Its evil effects exist to this day. What could be more masterful, more farsighted, than his *Minute* of 1824 on this subject, or the one of 1820 on the principles of British rule in India, written in his first year as Governor of Madras? I repeat, that his *Minutes* ought to have been made a classic, without a copy of which no Briton should ever have been allowed to proceed to India. The penultimate paragraph of this great *Minute* runs thus: “When we compare other countries with England, we usually speak of England as she is now—we scarcely ever think of going back to the Reformation and we are apt to regard every country as ignorant and uncivilized, whose state of government does not somewhat approximate to our own, even though it should be higher than our own was at no very distant date.” It was this paragraph that led me to epitomize it in the term, the Time-gap, which I used in the earlier part of this talk. It is the Time-gap that constituted, then as now, the differences of the two peoples, the British and Indian. Its non-recognition has led to a harvest of troubles and misunderstandings.

Here my friend paused and there was silence for a few minutes. ‘I must be briefer in dealing with the three remaining M’s, lest my exposition weary you.

‘Of the lively Malcolm, who, it has been said, “carried sunshine with him whithersoever he went”, I will only quote from one of his writings, also on the Time-gap. “If our system is in advance of the community, if it is founded on principles they do not comprehend and has forms and usages adverse to their habits, we shall experience no adequate return of confidence and allegiance. To secure these results

we are not called to lower ourselves to their standard, but

we must descend so far from the real or supposed eminence on which we stand as to induce them to accompany us in the work of improvement. Great and beneficial alterations in society to be complete, must be produced within the society itself they cannot be the mere fabrication of its superiors, or of a few who deem themselves enlightened." Malcolm wrote this in 1821 in the same year as Munro his intimate friend, wrote to Canning, the brilliant British Premier his great fear that the British Government will insist on making Anglo-Saxons of the Hindus

Mountstuart Elphinstone was an omnivorous reader and student. Though not of the superb physique of Malcolm, he had what General Briggs called "an innate pride of not being excelled by anyone in manly habits" In mentality and physique he formed an admirable combination. Here is a typical statement on the value of the preservation of Indian scholarship "At no time could I wish the purely Hindu part of the course should be totally abandoned. It would surely be a preposterous way of adding to the intellectual treasures of a nation to begin by the destruction of its indigenous literature and I cannot but think that the future attainments of the natives will be increased in extent as well as in variety by being as it were, engrafted on their own previous knowledge, and imbued with their own original and peculiar character

He served thirty years continuously in India, and won in the famous farewell address in February 1827 this praise from his subjects, of whom he himself had been the conqueror. Owing to the "regard shown to our native laws and customs etc., etc." "we are led to consider the influence of the British Government as the most important and desirable blessing which the Supreme Being could have bestowed on our native land

Metcalf was the youngest of my four Ms. To a friend he privately wrote this which might now be held to be

péculiar but was then a necessary piece of wisdom "There is no such being, I feel sure, as an honest Native Agent from Cape Cormorin to Cashmere, and they who confide in them are sure to be deceived But we must make use of them, for we can seldom do without them, and they have the right to kind, respectful, and gentlemanlike treatment " So Metcalfe voiced the absence of civic sense in the Indian of his day. He served continuously in India for thirty-eight years

'We had then, in those days preceding Lord Dalhousie, days when England was *distant*, men who could rule and help India, as she should be ruled and helped

'Enough to to-night,' said my friend, rising to bring the sitting to an end 'We will discuss some familiar and daily examples of the absence and presence of civic sense at our next meeting.' I smiled inwardly at his saying 'we will discuss', and took my departure

## VII

**T**he consideration of great men is always attractive, for great men are great so that they surpass themselves and are objective, not subjective said my friend at the next meeting between us. Our four M's were great for no other reason than that they understood the Indians and the principles of their thought and conduct that differed so markedly from their own. They were great because their minds were free and not confined by conventions beyond which the representative Britons find themselves in a no-man's land. They were not frightened to find themselves outside the barriers of custom but set about to make themselves at home there and so became four wise and much loved governors.

We now however will leave the four M's and return again to our homely examples of the partial and conventional outlooks of representative subjective men.

Let us take as an example, the wide-spread misunderstandings connected with the word corruption. We have heard that the last of the four M's stated that from Cape Cormoran to Cashmere there was no such being as an honest native agent in his time. This characteristic of the attitude of Indians in governmental employ is still prevalent and is stigmatized with the word "corruption." The clerk is corrupt if he happens upon any apparently safe opportunity to

be so, and many provincial ministers have been and are corrupt

'A dictionary definition of the word "corrupt" is "to change from a sound to a putrid or putrescent state". Corruption, then, presumes a sound state to begin with, from which there is a decline to something unsound. The representative Briton presumes that the Indian has or should have a national civic sense, such as he himself displays to his own government at home or to any other British government. In India he finds something very different, something which he, never having been under an alien government for many centuries, fails to understand. Hence his misuse of the word corruption. It is not only a question of bad conduct, it is also one of bad thinking, and it is bad thinking which produces the irritation consequent upon the failure of British ethical measures to fit the Indian circumstances. A man who thinks badly finds himself at odds with a strange people, and has to take refuge by attaching himself to a group or herd, which indulges in similar bad thinking. That is what the representative Briton does. Britons are mostly bad thinkers in India, as a consequence, whatever their outward semblance and public speeches are, in privacy their poor opinion of the Indian is not hard to eluce. It is there in all the bad thinkers in India, and the worse the thinking, the more acrid is the opinion.

'How different the picture would be, if it were realized that *the Indian, whether Hindu or otherwise, is not yet actuated by a civic sense but by a family, caste, or communal sense*. Judgments and things generally would be more truthful and realistic. They would be on a psychological plane, and not on a romantic one. Then, for instance, the following illustrations of common enough Indian conduct would be understood

'A high Indian official of X community dies. His successor is one of Y community. The consequence is that little



by little the subordinate officials who have mainly been X men are forced out and replaced by Y men. How it happens one does not exactly know but the X men are subjected to nagging and to petty complaints, and nothing they do or do not do can be right. Eventually they are forced out as undesirable persons can be forced out of any society by similar means. "Pretty sort of justice" is the comment of the Briton, in its mildest terms. But the notable thing is that Indians and with them the X men are not surprised at what happens, only the Briton is. To the X men it is unfortunate, but not inhumane or corrupt. They use no such terms in describing it. They accept it as an accountable mischance. It is the communal sense at work.

There are two candidates for a post. A succeeds and B fails. A takes on the work, but after a time complaints are made against him, and, in these days, as I myself recently witnessed against her. These complaints are listened to by a British superior with the eventual result that A is dismissed. But, say the British superior is more thorough and hence more suspicious, he will investigate, and if he has any ability at getting to the truth of Indian matters, he will find that the complainants against A have really no grievances: they have merely complained because B has asked them to do so. He will find further that they do not see anything wrong in this. B is of their community. By helping him in his immediate need they have gained communal approval and moreover they have established a right to a *quid pro quo* from him in the future. Perhaps the British official now takes a further step. He sends for A and explains to him how the complaints arose. He will then be surprised to find that A knew all about it from the beginning but did not put this knowledge into his defence to his superior. The Briton feels firstly that the Briton would not believe him, secondly that he himself would never be able to expose the complainants, and thirdly that in the circumstances it were

better to submit to fate than to incur the certain and continued enmity of his rival and his rival's supporters. He feels no deep civic grievance against his opponent. He has been outwitted in a way that he understands, and he will probably confine himself to persuading such influential men as he can to put in good words on his behalf, and to a defence of circumstantial evidence with a plea for mercy on the grounds of his poverty, his dependent family, and his real devotion to his duty. But he will not come down to the rock-bottom of the civic sense, which is the Briton's, because he has not got it, and because the public, to whom a Briton could and would appeal, is non-existent.

'So also is it in the courts of law. The Briton relies on solemnly sworn evidence and the assumption that witnesses on oath will speak the truth. This is the basis of the established Courts of Law in India. Let us suppose a case comes up in which there is a strong communal, or caste, or other sectional feeling. The Indian judge and barristers will know that the witnesses will all be communal, and that a dozen or more will be got to swear to the truth of a fabricated document. But they will not ask a witness in the box how the community has forced him to appear and what evidence it has required him to give. They support the conventions of the Law, because the Law supports them. They will, therefore, question and cross-examine in the conventional fashion and, perhaps, have no difficulty in showing that all the witnesses of both sides are, as regards facts, hopelessly untrustworthy. A British judge and British barristers will, on the other hand, live in a condition of being chronically shocked by the readiness with which false witness is given and may unburden themselves in their after-dinner leisure to their wives, though their wives may be more secretly sympathetic to those who protect their kith and kin by the germane gift of fibbing. The British legalists, however, are accustomed to men who, on the whole, will respect the oath they have taken,

because their civic sense tells them that their own civic position depends upon the law and its protection to citizens being upheld. Not so the Indian. He is not under the dominance of a civic, but of a family, a caste or communal sense.

I have an excellent example of the power of the family sense which I will read aloud to you

My friend, with the complacent smile which his face assumed when he was about to present an intellectual gift rose and got down a foolscap book in which he pasted paper extracts.

It is reported by a British officer in *The Indian Review*. Here it is. I was at one time in command of a squadron of Indian cavalry. In the Indian army during the summer months, work comes almost to a standstill, and leave is freely granted to the men to visit their homes in the villages I have described. There is no greater home-lover than the Indian, and these spells of two or three months' leave or furlough are greatly prized and eagerly looked forward to by the men. For anyone to refuse leave is almost unheard of. On one occasion when the leave rolls of my squadron came up for my approval I found that my senior Indian officer, a Sikh Ressaldar, had refused his leave. This pointed to something very wrong, and I asked the Ressaldar privately to tell me what it meant. He said, "Well, Sahib, I don't mind telling you as you will understand. You know my brather Isa Singh? I knew his brother, a *sowar* (trooper) in the ranks, a worthy fellow, but with none of the qualities that would mark him for promotion. Well, said the Ressaldar, when I go home my life is pestered out of me by my relations as to why Isa Singh is not promoted. They point out that I am a senior officer, that I am a friend of the Colonel and the powers that be—how does it come about that my brother remains a trooper when I have this pull? I point out that Isa Singh is not fit for promotion, but they say, 'What has that to do with it—are you not his brother?' My life was

made such a burden to me when last on leave, that this year I decided to remain in the Regiment, where these matters are understood ”

‘Now, the moral of this story lies in the fact that throughout India, certainly rural India, public opinion, and universal sympathy, would be, not with the Rissaldar but with his relations in the village. The family tie is inconceivably strong in India, and the claims of one’s own flesh and blood are looked upon as far more binding than any other, certainly as more so than those of a nebulous organization like the State ’

My friend here closed the book with a triumphant bang, looked at me with a challenging survey and then broke into a great shout of laughter

‘I am one who likes to be boisterous, when I find good intellectual company, and this officer is very good company to my way of thinking. What a relief to talk to him! He would understand that nearly every English term relating to character has the same sound, when spoken by an Indian or Englishman, but quite a different meaning. Take charity for example——’ Here I made the suggestion of a yawn. ‘Enough,’ he said, ‘but come in to-morrow or the evening after, while we are three, you, I and this officer. We shall be in a happy mood.’ He slapped me heartily on the back and dismissed me

## VIII

**O**n the next occasion on which I went to see my friend he welcomed me with great glee saying I have something choice to tell you. At our last meeting we were on the verge of discussing charity and no sooner had you gone than I was reminded of a piquant interview in which this highly respected virtue of charity played an amusing role I will tell you about it.

Some years ago there was a Secretary of State for India, who seemed to me a man of original mind I was in London at the time, and I yielded to the temptation to send him a memorandum on the need for a primer upon the different meanings that Indians and Britons attach to certain words and lines of conduct. I gave one illustration to elucidate my meaning. It is one that very prettily reveals the fact that the Indian is engrossed by the family sense and knows that the Englishman will not understand the strength of its dominion over him.

An Englishman had a servant for some twenty years. The man was an admirable bearer and upon him the whole domestic content of his bachelor master depended. The master was generous and though a bit irascible had the warm friendship for his bearer which is so pleasant a feature in India. He helped him in his difficulties, was parental to his family and generally made the bearer as dependent on him as he was on the bearer.

‘Suddenly the bearer announced that he was ill, no further service was possible, he must retire to his village. The master saw no signs of illness, but regretfully accepted what he knew to be inevitable. In acknowledgement of a long and faithful service, he gave the bearer a handsome lump sum down. Two months had not passed, when he discovered the bearer had entered the service of an acquaintance. Exasperation! “Damn this! Damn that! The trickster! It does not matter how long you have had one of these fellows or how good you have been to them. They’ll trick you!”

‘I did not think this was the reason and made inquiries. It turned out that the bearer’s father and uncle owned a shop in a village and had got into money difficulties. The *izzat* or repute of the family in their old hereditary village was at stake, and the only hope was to capitalize the bearer’s faithful service. This good son did not hesitate to sacrifice his “provident fund” of twenty years’ service. But he feared to give the true reason to his master, he feared an outburst of temper and a blank refusal to give the large sum eventually given, hence the trickery. It may not in this case have been necessary. But the servant, being a representative Indian, found representative Britons inexplicable and not to be dealt with on the lines of Indian reason and conduct. When I made this clear to the master, it is pleasant to add that he was deeply touched by the high ethical conduct of his old friend, the bearer, and shortly after their original relations were restored.

‘It seems that this illustration pleased the Secretary of State, and, being a man of enterprise, he sent me an invitation to call upon him at his residence in order to meet a few high officials of the India Office.

‘I went with pleasure. The Secretary greeted me and introduced me to the three officials, and said “I think a little discussion on the different outlook of Briton and Indian will be of value. It is a subject that is rarely ventilated, yet I

think it requires considerable emphasis. Before we begin, however let us refresh ourselves.

He was a humorous fellow for as he himself handed round whiskies and sodas, on giving me mine, he smiled and whispered "I have given you a double. You may need it. Whether it was a double I do not know but it did not affect me.

I gave some of my illustrations, which were not warmly received. Then Mr A. gravely rebuked me. It seems to me you will only allow the Indian a modicum of our British virtues. But they certainly have one in large measure and you cannot deny it. They are charitable. His colleagues supported him. Certainly" said Mr B., they contribute bountifully to a good cause when asked to do so. Even the folk of moderate means are not wanting, added Mr C. with a challenging eye upon me. "I do not dispute this," I replied. But as usual, the word charity has a different meaning to Briton and Indian. In the British sense, charity springs from compassion with all suffering. A truly charitable man, whether rich or poor will stop the ill usage of a donkey as well as soothe the hurt of a child.

"Charity in this sense, scarcely exists in India, except amongst the Jains, to whom thoughtfulness for animals is a religious ordinance. Charity is not an emotional impulse to help suffering, wherever or whenever found, quite apart from the poor of one's own family and one's own animals. A charitable man—and certainly not the rich and generous donator—will not turn aside to assuage the pain of a mis-used beast of burden. The horse will be beaten, the ox have its tail twisted and the camel be hurt, but the sight of animal suffering stirs no natural feeling in him. It is we British who have put a check to the cruelty of the Indian to the beast within his power. The Indian's public charity is confined to the donation upon established lines. It will perhaps be civic more often it is communal. The rich man of the city will

build a dispensary, a school, a hostel, which will bear his name. He will subscribe handsomely to any big fund that is being raised by authority. But he will not do with his right hand, what is unknown to his left. Both hands know quite well what they are doing. They are raising the owner's *izzat* or *repute*, and already their owners bear within them the anticipation that a grateful authority may acknowledge them in the Birthday or other honours. As many as eleven columns, much of it small print, will be found in the *Times of India* of these honours on the Royal Birthday, and there is as great a zeal for public honours in India to-day as there was in the days of the decline of the Roman Empire."

"Yet an honour may be very laudable," said the Minister with a twinkle in his eye. The smile became general. He had recently been made Sir John. "Was it before or after you had the opportunity to learn the ways of India?" I was impish enough to ask. "After," he replied, and there was a loud and long laugh.

When it had subsided, the Minister turned to me and said, "Have you then no Indian friend, who is charitable in the widest sense?" I replied, "I have, sir, the honour to be the friend of a wealthy Indian whose charity is complete and an example to all men. He sets aside a substantial part of his income and a confidential clerk, a cousin of his, has the duty of giving it wherever there seems to be need, even too when it appears undeserving, as our phrase goes, such as to help young lads, who have unfortunately got by their conduct a spell in jail. He is a ready subscriber to civic projects. But, in addition, he lives the saying of the poet Lowell 'It is not what you give, but what you share that is true charity.' He is active in the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, he gives the gentlest addresses to students and others on the need of civic conduct and consideration. Where there is a family tragedy or dangerous illness, there he is to be found. And he is a man of will. He has been the



head of the municipal affairs of my town for a longer time than any other man, and would have been made permanently so by the desue and votes of his fellow citizens, had the municipal law not been altered. It is to him that business men turn at any crisis, and he who speaks for them to for them to authority" Authority itself has a high regard for him. His reason for refusing a high public honour revealed how well he knew himself and the position he enjoyed in the hearts of his fellow citizens. If I accepted it" he said to me, "it would make me different to other men. It would be a denial of what I myself have become in this city a citizen amongst and for citizens!" Such men, I concluded, exist in India and, if they guided its development, all would be well.

I had finished and I looked at the Minister. His eyes were directed above the meeting and seemed to be searching for something in the dusky recesses of the ceiling. Mr Kwang," he said dreamily and his superior man, but his country men were capable of ethical revivals."

I was not only surprised went on my friend, but I was humiliated, and I am rarely humiliated. I was surprised at the depth of his comment it reflected on all the illustrations and comments I had brought forward that evening. It showed that this genial minister was not only a minister but a master. For truly Master Kwang or Confucius as he is more commonly called, taught his countrymen the civic sense and not severance into castes as the seers of Hinduism taught. Therefore his people have shown many times in their history the capacity for ethical revival. My feeling of humiliation passed as this great saying suffused my thought during a solitary walk in the empty spaces of St. James's and the Green Park.

## IX

‘When I left you after our last talk,’ I said to my friend, ‘I thought over what the Minister said on your finishing your illustrations, and it suddenly revealed itself to me as an omen’

‘How an omen? I am much interested,’ my friend replied

‘Your illustrations have for their object the conclusion that the fundamental outlook of the Indian and Briton is different. English words may be applied to the Indian, such for example as “family”, but the meaning that attaches to it is widely different in the two cases. One has constantly to remind oneself of these differences, otherwise the first association of the English mind in using a word will cling and its use will be quite misleading. One may, therefore, say that it is not possible for anyone living in Great Britain or the United States to understand the Indian at all. The home-British and American figure of him is quite different to the reality. The same also is true with representative Britons though they may have lived a long time in India.’ I paused

My friend nodded assent. ‘Pray continue,’ he said

‘The Minister, being an exceptional man, grasped these truths by means of the very few illustrations you gave him,’ I continued. ‘His reference to Master Kwang meant, I presume, that by your illustrations you had proved to him the difference of the civic Briton and the communal Indian, and

that the next step was to get the superior man, who would teach the civic sense to the Indians as Master Kwang taught it to the Chinese

Yes agreed my friend, but he prefaced it with a sigh. He felt its difficulties

Still his point was at least this, that you had given him enough illustrations to satisfy him, and the question then was What next?

That is well said, commented my friend, and, therefore, I know that you agree with him. You think we should decide What next? I feel sure you have ideas upon the subject. How then, do you propose we should proceed?

I propose that we should leave the Indian, as assumed to be by the home-British and interested Americans, and get down to the real Indian, I replied

And they are? queried my friend

The people of the country I replied, who are and always have been in large majority peasants and villagers

He greeted this with a roar of approval. *Shabash*, he cried, and again *shabash*! And where would you start with the peasants?

I would start with the olds as you termed it, 300 B.C. with Megasthenes, I replied

Yes, and since, as has been often said, India is a historic, we have to start with a visitor he assented.

The character of the peasants, which Megasthenes records I continued is that, though far more numerous than any other class, they were exempt from all military and other public services. They tilled the land they paid the taxes they entirely avoided going into the towns they were by disposition mild and gentle. The warriors and kings protected them, and when the warriors fought each other they were forbidden by custom to harm the peasants, who could be seen working peaceably in their fields, while the warriors were fighting close by. The peasants were, indeed entirely

and completely separated from what we would call the State. The warriors, on the other hand, were the servants of the king and ready at any moment to go on active service. They were liberally paid, and when not on service spent their time in enjoyment, "in idleness and drinking", to use the Greek traveller's words.

'And after Megasthenes?' inquired my friend, who had accompanied my words with nods of approval.

I hesitated, then continued: 'It seems to me there was no real change from this position for centuries. Townsend, in his famous book *Europe and Asia*, sums up this consistency when he wrote that the peasants "were the stakes in the game, not the players. It is for the right of taving them that all Indian revolutions, wars, invasions, movements of all kinds have occurred." The words so impressed me when I read them that I have since always carried them in my memory.'

'I, too,' said my friend, 'and also his vivid picture of the fascination that the game held for the bold and unscrupulous of the warrior caste, which follows: "It was a game in which any adventurer could take a part, and the prizes went to the most fortunate, the most resolute and the cleverest." You will remember, too, that Sir Richard Temple reported to the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, in 1868, that the game was particularly active at the time of the disintegration of the Moghul Empire, at which time the British ascendancy began. He might have added that it was always most active at times when any centralized and established governments in India, of which there were many, were in decline or in actual dissolution.' He paused but I did not take up the offered word.

'And what would you say was the most significant phrase as regards the present peasants in the description of Megasthenes?' he asked.

'I should say', I replied, 'that the peasants were all this time completely separated from the State. The words are

that the peasants were exempted from all military and other public services, I replied

I would repeat said my friend, the yet more fundamental nature of the peasants I also remember the words of McCrindle's translation of Megasthenes They are in disposition most mild and gentle They never go to town, either to take part in its tumults, or for any other purpose."

We have then an extraordinary condition, I said We have a huge inhabited area in which century after century the very vast majority of the people were severed from any share in the State It seems to me a very poor basis for what is now called political progress It must have bred a complete indifference to everything political, everything known under the term government, a negativity the most enduring in the whole story of the world I confess myself quite baffled by it. I proclaimed that the essence of the Indian question is the peasants and you applauded me, and then I come up against this paralysing nihilism

I noted a flicker of satisfaction pass over the face of my friend, and at once, with my knowledge of him, I realized that he was longing to take up the cue, which my last words this paralysing nihilism had offered him. He settled himself back in his chair, and began his discourse

Amongst all the publicists and politicians, who write and make speeches upon the Indian question, there exists really no *Indian* question. He shot out the word *Indian* like a bullet with a charge of acrimonious derision There is only *Nachajfung* as Goethe called it, Aping. In that inimitable book of Eckermann's *Talks with Goethe* the great sage said to Eckermann Only that is good for a people which comes from its own core and its own need without aping of others. What is good for a people at a certain historical stage may perhaps show itself as poison to another All attempts to introduce foreign novelty to a people, in whom a need for the same is not deep within its heart, are foolish, and all

devices with this revolutionary intent are without success for they are without God, who holds Himself aloof from such blundering ”

‘And what is the core of India? It lies in the passivity of the Indian peasants, their immediate, instinctive submission to power, which Meredith Townsend so graphically described. It has resulted in a permanency of subjection to what one of their greatest and most tolerant rulers, the Moghul Akbar, with a very able and tolerant Hindu Minister, Todar Mal, laid down as the governing principle of the State’s revenue “That there shall be left for every man as much as he requires for the support of himself and his family and for seed for the next crop. Thus much shall he have. Whatever remains is the land-tax.” So even under Akbar and Todar Mal, the peasants of India were what Townsend called the pawns in the game, and under Akbar that game was, one can well say, a great and noble one, namely the welding of all India into one. His expenses were, therefore, huge and his exactions from the peasants were correspondingly severe. He was, in short, forced to this severity as was Peter the Great of Russia, who was almost his contemporary. He did not choose it.

‘Apart, however, from such times of the supreme aims and activity of very great men, there seems little reason to suppose that the Indian peasants were ever allowed to rise above the level of extreme simplicity. Munro, a most reliable student and authority, expressed the conviction that “However light Indian revenue may be in the theories of Indian writers, in practice it has always been heavy.” The peasants, except as payers of taxes, have been *nothing* in India and consequently India has in a sense been *nothing*. India has been a State without a people and that means no State. She has had to submit to conqueror after conqueror.

‘But we must not fall into the error of viewing the customary conditions of the Indian peasants from our modern

standpoint of a democracy in which each voting member of the nation, male or female is *something* in the State. The severance of the Indian peasants from the State had for them certain advantages, which we have seen, such as sparing them from the hardships of war. No Indian peasant went to war practically none of them left the villages. So their State-nothingness protected them and allowed an endless succession of humble lives lived not without content and simple happiness.

It is, however quite another matter with the political States. Whether they be *democratic* or *autocratic*, they make all active men and women share in the welfare or ill fare of the State and be something, however little, in the whole. It is to this type of State that we, the British, have introduced the Indian peasants.

At first we had success. The period when we came to India was that of the complete disintegration which followed the downfall of the Moghul Empire, and, therefore, a time when the bold and unscrupulous adventurers had all the opportunities they could wish. We were far more just to the peasants than ever were the heartless players for the stake of taxing them. But, after the period of the four M's, we gave them big doses of *Nachassung* or Aping. We gave them our own home-system. We introduced courts of law and then allowed the *sowcar* or moneylender once a village functionary subject to its will, to go to these courts to recover his debts from the peasants under the aegis of the law. It was to him that we handed the peasants over from our personal rule, which they found so just that large numbers of them escaped from Native States to live under it. The peasants had breathed freely awhile and had the chance to become *something*. But we choked them and thrust them back into *nothingness*.

Here he rose and fetched a large cardboard-covered book from a shelf. This, he continued, is the *Report of the*

*Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928, pages 433 and 434 It tells of the complete servitude of peasants of Bihar and Orissa, known as *Kamias* "Kamias", says the *Report*, "are bound servants of their masters, in return for a loan received, they bind themselves to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of interest due to the loan. In practice the system leads to the absolute degradation of the *Kamias* " It tells how the *Kamia's* wife may also be put to work by the *sowcar*, and ends with these words "The *Kamia* never sees any money, unless it be a few pice he may earn in his spare time Consequently, he has no chance of ever repaying the principal of his debt and becoming a free man again A *kamiauti* bond therefore involves a life sentence The condition becomes hereditary " Here my friend closed the book with a bang and went on 'These men and women under British rule are still *nothing*

'The Commissioners make a lot of suggestions, all of them Aping Never once do they think for one moment that they may be themselves the blunderers Never, of course, did they for one instance recall that they came from a country in which William the Conqueror had turned land into private property, to a country where this was not so Never do they recall what their more recent ancestors did to the English peasants They never mention that, at the time of their investigation, only some six per cent of their own people worked upon the land They never recall the words of Goethe, because they have probably never read them or, if they have read them, they had no mind upon which the words could anchor. They do not even remember their Shakespeare's "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves " They do not recall the words of Kautilya in the *Arthasastra* "The rise of non-cultivating landowners is to be avoided " As for Land Revenue, the controllers of which, said Munro, hold the welfare of the people in their



hands, it, the Land Revenue, never heads a chapter or appears in the index. They are self-conditioned blunderers. They never look outside at other tropical countries and governments. They had, one feels almost sure, never read what Mr Boys, of the Bengal Civil Service, wrote after his visit to Java in 1892.

My friend here again rose and got a book from its shelf and read out the following "The Javans have escaped the fatal gift of proprietary right which has been the ruin of so many tens of thousands of our peasantry in India, and with which, while striving to bless, we have so effectively cursed the soil of India. It is not too much to say that the loss of the many benefits which would have been conferred on Java by the substitution of the English for the Dutch rule, is not too high a price to escape from the many evils of the unrestrained power to alienate private property Under their present Government the Javans, according to our English ideas, ought to be the most miserable people That they are not so but that, on the contrary they are the most prosperous of Oriental peasantry is mainly due to one cause—the inability of the Javan to raise one single florin on the security of his fields, and the protection thus gained against the moneylender and himself Nature is bountiful in Java, and undoubtedly the abundant fertility of the soil enables the Javan to stand up under many ills to which he is subject but were her fecundity doubled were she able to pour her gifts as from a cornucopia into his lap nothing would ultimately save him from the moneylender and from the consequent eviction from his fields and his home, if he were able to pledge the one or the other as a security for an advance."

He stopped reading and closed the book with a gentleness that contrasted with his treatment of the *Report* I was deeply impressed by what he read So near by then, to our Indian Empire, this solution had existed in actual fact -

‘How is it that the Commissioners make no reference to this?’

‘Let us put this down to a fundamental,’ was his reply ‘These men of this Commission were what Goethe calls men of middling talent, which is always bound to the present and nourishes itself on what presents itself in daily life. It is genius that enables a man to pass out of this bounded self and view a matter generally. But, as the great French scholar, Gustave le Bon, so assuredly demonstrates, commissions and committees are the contradiction of genius. They destroy its creative power. They sink their individual members to a lower level than they really are because of the infection of the crowd spirit, as he calls it. It was so with this Commission. It came out to lighten the darkness of the Indian countryside. It made six hundred and eighty-seven recommendations. They were like a display of Brock’s fireworks. They made for the time being a notable and even dazzling exhibition, but when each of the six hundred and eighty-seven fireworks had made its display, the darkness is the same as before.’

## X

**T**he dictum of Goethe on the danger of *Nachaffung* or Aping of others by a revolutionizing country is the touchstone of the reliability of a man, who writes or discourses on the subject, stated my friend at our next meeting.

That does not mean that one does not have to study other countries. I asserted on my part. One can learn much from them, but one does not have to ape them. It is only men of Goethe's "middle talent" who want to do that.

Very true, agreed my friend. We find, in fact, that that invaluable work of Eckermann's, *Talks with Goethe* guides us wherever we hope to go. Let us take the sage's saying about the core of a nation. India is a huge agricultural nation and, therefore, the Indian peasant is the core of India.

It is a good big core, I said. A good deal bigger than the rest of the Indian apple.

My friend laughed heartily at this and then said. But the simile is a very suitable one nevertheless, for the part of the apple that most educated people to-day are interested in is not the core, but the outer edible fruit. The fruit is separated from the core, which is of no interest to the eater. But we have to study cores and the chief core we propose to discuss is the peasant of India.

‘True,’ I asserted ‘But we must not concern ourselves with him only We must concern ourselves with other peasants’

‘There are many,’ said my friend. ‘Of which, in particular, are you thinking?’

‘I was recalled again by *The Talks* to another great agricultural people, greater in numbers than even the Indian, the historic Chinese’

My friend looked puzzled at this ‘I cannot recall that Goethe ever talked to Eckermann about the Chinese,’ he said ‘Please remind me’

‘He discussed a Chinese novel which he had read,’ I went on ‘He found it highly noteworthy and was impressed by an unfailing elevating character that it had He emphasized, if I remember rightly, the essential morality and decorum, which permeated almost every detail and setting of the story, until Eckermann broke out with the observation that this must be one of the very best of the Chinese novels Not a bit of it, Goethe replied, there were thousands of such novels and they maintain for century after century the strong moderation, which characterized the Chinese Goethe also introduced one of his charming confessions about his own work, namely that it was the same standard which he set himself in his *Hermann and Dorothea*, and, he added, which also adorns the novels of the English Richardson’

‘Excellent,’ cried my friend with warm approval ‘Your memory of it is very good, and, what is more, that in itself shows how well you have appreciated this valuable discussion I do not know how it is that I had forgotten it’

‘It impressed me so much, when I read it, that I set to work to find out more of the literary character of the Chinese’

‘Tell me more,’ broke in my friend eagerly ‘I see your target, but I do not see the flight of your arrow And, apart from the bearing of target and arrow on the Indian question,

I am anxious to know more. My knowledge does not go beyond the fact that the Chinese have always had the most profound reverence for literature.

That is so as regards the Chinese classics, I went on. It is this reverence that bound the whole people together and brought about their singular solidarity amongst the nations. They had all of them, even the girls, one education in chief the education in the Chinese classics. It differed only in degree the duffer of course, getting only a glimmer of what they meant according to his dufferdom. But there were so many schools and the wants of the schoolmasters so moderate, that even the poorest parents could send their children to school. Every boy toed the same line at the start, but how far he got, of course, depended upon himself though the encouragement of a successful scholar was, one can say a national instinct. His progress might extend from the village to the larger school, then to the B.A. as one might call it, after admission to the University then from this to the M.A. and from the M.A. to the final success of the Han-lin degree, the examination for which was held in the imperial palace and conducted by the Emperor. The high success of a candidate was notified by the customary ceremonies of congratulation amidst the excited and demonstrative approval of the people itself. The success being in a mode of human excellence in which all had a personal share according to degree, the whole body of the people as a nation was concerned. And the object of the teaching of these classics was one and the same—it was right conduct in all and every sphere of life, right conduct in the home, the field the workshop, the office, the house the village, the town, the provincial, and imperial capitals. The special applications of right conduct were learnt as so many graftings upon the one original national tree. There has been nothing like it in any other people of the world. Moreover as the historic Chinese were a thoroughly practical people, they did not leave out severity Discipline

was rigidly enforced. The standard of conduct in the schools was supported by the free application of the rod to the recalcitrant pupil, the rod was also applied at the order of a Board of Elder Farmers to the farmer, who neglected his land, and by the same Board the land could be taken from the indifferent landowner. The same severity was observed to the very topmost people, even the Emperor himself, who was held guilty of certain national disasters.

‘The result in agriculture—the chief occupation of the realm—was the unique one that all people had their share in its success. Agriculture in historic China was not a special industry amongst other industries, nor was it, what it has now in modern countries largely become, a jigsaw puzzle filled in by a number of specializing scientific experts. It was a *National Art*, in which the whole nation took part. Every householder knew the value of the household’s wastes and excrement to the farmers. Every sort of other excrement, especially that of birds, the domestic geese, ducks and poultry, birds’ feathers, all bones and the dust of bones, human hair, bean cake, and other varied wastes were turned into compost by the excrement of horses, oxen, pigs, etc. The wastes, in particular, of the butcher, the poulterer, the glue-maker, the tanner and the hairdresser and certain other followings were carefully collected. There was but one very characteristic exception, namely, scraps of paper, upon which fragments of the Chinese characters were printed. Such scraps were gathered up by the scholars, burnt in the temple and the ashes consigned to a river’s stream. All other organic substance was put upon the land with water and mud, and, when the farmer ploughed, his object was not to plough straight furrows, but to mix these substances with the soil. So in historic China, agriculture was a national art, in which the people as a whole took part. The soil was fed and the soil fed the nation. Under this unification, there could not be and, of course, was not anything at all that resembled caste

The Chinese were divided into four classes they were, in order of importance, the scholars, the farmers the artisans, and the merchants. The scholars framed the universal mind and the farmers fulfilled it in the next most important functions, the feeding and clothing of the nation.

I see your conclusion said my friend, who had listened to me with the closest interest. *Nachaffung* or Aping of the historic Chinese and their many centuries of an especial culture is not possible in the case of India, with its totally different values.

That is the inevitable conclusion, I agreed. But that does not mean that we have to exclude all possible help from the example of China. We have seen that the Chinese peasant was generally recognized as requiring the greatest possible support from the whole people, if he was to do his job effectively. Our first object then is to elevate the Indian peasant to such a generally recognized position.

That means a revolution in values—in short an actual revolution, my friend said eagerly. In the *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture* it is clear that the Indian ryot is and has been on the whole a degraded creature and that the land upon which he works, in the words of the Agricultural Adviser to Government, "had reached its state of maximum impoverishment many years ago." The two degradations go together hand in hand. The reason is, as you have suggested, that the peasants in India have not been regarded as practitioners of the first and greatest Creative Art, as has been the case in China. That is a valuable conclusion without which we could not get a firm conviction of the true need of the masses of India at the present time, namely right valuation. But before we proceed on this line, I would like, on my part, to review another large and semi continental peasantry of whom I have made a study, as you have of the Chinese.

You mean the peasants of Russia, I said.

‘You are right,’ he replied ‘The success of the Soviet Republics has drawn upon them the eyes of the whole world But it is now late We must keep this subject until our next meeting ’



## XI

When I last walked away from your bungalow I said to my friend, I felt I had a humble duty. My friend smiled. I think I can guess what it is, said he. But please continue.

Russia is a very large and inviting subject for the orator I began.

Here my friend broke out into one of his resounding laughs and added, Who has to be restrained from its temptations.

That is what I was going to suggest, I said. I want you to give an account of the Russian peasants on the same lines as I described the Chinese peasantry.

I quite agree with you, my friend replied. The Russian leap into dominance has startled the world to one amazed question. What is this Soviet System? And enthusiasts think that by adopting the same system, they will achieve the same success. The temptation to Aping is immense—nor will it be gentler. There are countries, we must agree, whose upper classes have failed as dismally as did those of imperial Russia.

I felt my friend was already being tempted to discursiveness, so I repeated my request. I hope you will, therefore, give me your account of the Russian peasantry and how it is they came to their present position.

‘Certainly You have the right to ask this,’ replied my friend, then he added, with a bow, which had none of his accustomed irony, ‘You have set a sound example in your picture of the unity of the Chinese people, preserved for so many centuries by the bond of their classics That is how we can understand a people, if it is a people and not a conglomeration I intend, therefore, to follow the same course in my account of the Russians, and expose a unique character in the welding of a nation.’

‘It will be something very different to that of the Chinese’, said I, ‘and for myself I find it difficult to see what in particular it was that made the Russians Russia ’

‘You are right’, he continued, ‘in your phrase “that made the Russians Russia” The question now before us is What was it that made the Russians, chiefly at that time as now the Great Russians, into the Russia we see to-day? It is a very important and vital question,’ and he cast a glance of great eagerness at me, foretelling that the discourse he was about to deliver was one of which he had made a decisive study

‘I have already said that I myself have no answer,’ I replied

My friend smiled with the pleasure of finding that the field was his and his only Then he drew himself up in his chair and brought his right hand into his left palm with a resounding smack ‘It was force, titanic force,’ he declaimed ‘The Russians were a very stubborn lot of men, and they were not worked upon by the things of the mund, but by sheer force They were the hot iron upon the anvil and were beaten into shape and unity,’ and once more he smote his fist into his palm

‘The Great Russians had their home in the northern and middle belts of the present European Russia It is a part of the Flatland that is so notable a feature of a physical map of the European-Asiatic continent ’

I nodded. I have often studied that map with interest. From the Baltic to the Sea of Okhotsk, except for the Urals and the Stanovoi Mountains bordering the Okhotsk Sea, there is no land above 2,000 feet, and the Urals and Stanovoi do not rise above some 5 000 feet. I have studied it because the present vast extent of the Soviet Republics comprises this land, which a man on foot could traverse from west to east without being balked by any mountain barriers. You do well to call it Flatland

My friend smiled. It is you who digress now but it is a legitimate digression, provided we do not pursue it. Let us return to the Great Russians getting their sustenance from clearings they made in the forest along the banks of the great rivers and their tributaries of European Russia, the Volga the Don, and the Dnieper flowing south to the Caspian and Black Seas, and the Dvina flowing northwards into the White Sea.

In the course of history these Russians were threatened by more united peoples, the Turki Mongols, who had overwhelmed them on the east and south, and the Poles and Baltic peoples on the west. To save them as a people from complete subjection, in other words to make these Russians Russia, these stubborn lovers of isolation and its freedom had to be hammered into unity

The dramatic and, in many senses, grand and awful story of this hammering has recently been worthily retold by Sir Bernard Pares in *A History of Russia*. As histories go this story of salvation of a seemingly weak people is comparatively modern, for it may be said to have begun in the fifteenth century A.D.

In A.D. 1480 Ivan III was the head of the Moscow Principality placed in the forest belt of Russia and extending to the Baltic and the tundra of the Arctic Ocean lands the poverty of which offered little attraction to more advanced peoples. Ivan was the Prince, and with him was an aristo-

cracy of landowners or boyars, who, owing to lack of communications, enjoyed a considerable degree of independence. The peasants upon the land and river banks were farmers and fishermen. The boyars and the Prince got such wealth as they had from exactions placed upon the peasants. The peasants, on their part, were individually no well-lings, but men passionately desiring peace and freedom from interference, and resenting any excessive charges and duties the Prince and boyars put upon them. Even at that time they were wont, if exactions were heavy, to go farther away from authority, seeking new homes and freedom. This tendency on the part of the more adventurous has been admirably termed "flitting" by Sir John Maynard in his indispensable book, *The Russian Peasant*, 1913. This tendency to flitting has continued almost up to the present day, and the trickle began in the time of Ivan III and was destined to trickle across the Flatland eventually to reach the shores of the Pacific Ocean, the Caspian, and the Black Sea.

Here I raised my eyes and my friend detected me.

'I do not intend to digress,' he said severely.

'Ivan III', he went on, 'was a great enough man to see that to turn Russians into Russia, two things were necessary. Firstly, the peasants must be forced to stay on their farms, and secondly, the boyars must be controlled and made subservient to the head of the State. Then such wealth as Russia possessed could be used to organize the State, the young men of the farms could be recruited for a standing army, the boyars could be forced to hold their land only on condition of fulfilling military and other necessary service.

'In this Ivan and his son, Vasily III, partially succeeded. They bound the peasants to the soil as serfs, they heavily punished flitters if they caught them, and the boyars, supported by their estates, were called upon to render military and state service. Russia as a unity began to emerge.

'But it was only a beginning. The opposition of the boyars

was great, their service neglected, and it seemed only a Titan could force them into obedience. The Titan, the first of the three Titans of the Russian story appeared in the son of Vasily Ivan IV (1520-84) later to be known as Ivan the Terrible.

Ivan succeeded his father at the age of four years and three years later his mother died. He and his brother lived in almost complete neglect. Later Ivan summed up their childhood in the following words "On the death of our mother Helena we became orphans in the fullest sense. Our subjects only furthered their own desires finding the country without a ruler."

The boy however was a child of genius. He had an excellent memory and, supported by an intense veneration for his parents and a deep belief in God and his own exalted position as the agent of God—a piety which never left him—he stored up many a painful memory of the ill which the boyars had inflicted on him and his country. His memory was bound up with the desire for vengeance for which he was suitably nurtured in cruelty by the boyars, for as children, the two brothers were taken to the torture chambers to harden them to its use. His chief escape from these horrors lay in his love of books. He became an omnivorous reader of all the literature he could assemble, and "buried himself in Byzantine lore, the history of the Saints and the Church, the histories of Byzantium and the ancient Principalities of Russia," as that fine writer Stephen Graham, tells us in his *Ivan the Terrible*.

At the age of fourteen Ivan acted like a man of later years. He had the chief boyar strangled and himself assumed the reins of government. Three years later he caused himself to be crowned as the first Tsar of all the Russias, and a few days after this assertive ceremony he married Anastasia. It was a fortunate marriage. Anastasia was beautiful, she was pious like Ivan, she possessed a greater humanity. Whilst she

lived, the young Ivan proved himself the best ruler Russia had yet experienced. When twenty-one he led a crusade against the Mongols of Kazan, who submitted the more readily because of his reputation as a humane monarch. Later he took Astrakhan with its Caspian coast and its share of the southern fertile belt of the Russian Flatland, he waged a successful war against Livonia, he reformed the Church, he kept the boyars in check, he promoted trade and communications with Europe, and sent ambassadors to England.

'Then, after thirteen years of devoted married life Anastasia died, leaving Ivan a son. The shock to Ivan was terrific and loosened the devil of cruelty, which was latent in him from the days of his childhood. The turbulence of the reawakened boyars stirred again the bitter memories and training of his childhood. He became Ivan the Terrible.

'I will not deal with the items of the Terrible in his injecting the utmost fear into the boyars, they can be read in Graham's lurid pages. It must suffice that, with his making them submit to local authorities for their good behaviour, with a secret police to spy upon them, with imprisonment, torture, and death, he cowed the survivors into complete submission, and so made Russia one under one ruler. Before he died, he had laid his hand of power upon Siberia and sealed the future fate of the Asiatic Flatland.

'After his death, the forceful drive to unity came to an end. Peasant anger and resistance towards their owners, the landlords, increased. "Peasant risings," writes Pares, "came to be a running chorus to the whole history of the State." Flitters multiplied and in fifty-six years after the death of Ivan reached the Sea of Okhotsk. Cossacks, highly skilled and disciplined horsemen, by their guerrilla warfare against the Mongols and Turks, became almost independent masters of the lower Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga. The divisions, jealousies, and rivalries of the big families weakened the

power of the Tsar and at one time, a Polish dynasty in Moscow only failed to establish itself because of the internal jealousies amongst the Poles themselves. It seemed, indeed that only one factor could harden Russia once more into a unity and that was a second ruler of titanic personality

The stage was set and the gathered gods of human destiny posed the question Was Russia to succumb and sink to Asiatic impotence before the ascending power of Europe or was she to become European and, further was she not only to become European, but to become the mightiest power of the Eurasian Continent? I call it a drama. I see it as such. The sober relation of the historians is too cold for its relation. What was needed, and again what was needed? There was only one answer—a hero a great man, a titanic man something far beyond the unctuous prescription for modern ills, a democracy The chatter of the millions, the manipulated votes of the thousands, roared my friend can never cut such Gordian Knots. Here the many are valueless, only the one solitary lonely man of genius has the magic power to join with the material of destiny and beat it into reality

Here my friend lowered his voice. I trust I am not being guilty of discursiveness he said with a sudden, unexpected humility

No sir I replied emphatically Your subject, I feel sure, demands your eloquence.

My friend smiled and continued in his usual quiet, but impressive voice. Peter the Great was the answer He was the second Titan to hew from the rock of circumstance the statue of Great Russia One is almost made breathless as one reads of this man in the vivid pages of Pares.

Let us look at this prodigious being, who lived for only fifty three years, and died as the consequence of plunging into the cold waters of the White Sea to save the lives of some drowning sailors Of those fifty-three years, he was

Tsar for forty-three years and, his dates being A D 1672–1725, it will be seen that he became Tsar precisely a century after the death of Ivan

‘He was physically a huge man, and so strong that he could bend iron rods with his hands. He had such immense shoulders that they seemed given to him to carry all Russia upon them. He was a man of inexhaustible energy and device. He was a victorious soldier and overcame the greatest soldier of the time, Charles XII of Sweden, on land and at sea. He added Livonia, Esthonia, and Ingermanland, as Baltic provinces to Russia, and in the last of the three, abandoning Moscow, the medievalism of which he loathed, he built a new capital, Saint Petersburg, upon a swamp and thus opened wide “the window on Europe” and direct contact with Western Europe. He built a fleet for the Baltic Sea and himself commanded it in its victory over the Swedes, and he also built flotillas on the Volga and Don, by which he was able to bring about a more rapid, southern transit for his troops. He took Azov at the mouth of the Don from the Turks, and at once began a gigantic programme of building harbours and vessels of every kind for activities upon the Black Sea.

‘Domestically he forced Europeanization upon Russians. He organized a permanent conscript army and himself designed and presided over its technique, equipment, commissariat, transport, stores, and recruits. He was a master of technique, himself the best practical carpenter in Russia, and, by taking machines to pieces and rebuilding them, he made himself a skilled mechanic. He got help from whomsoever he could and employed efficient foreigners in the highest offices. “Efficiency, efficiency, efficiency”, was his lasting cry, but the only man of entire efficiency was himself. He studied economics, and ordered and administered every detail of income and expenditure. He founded Russian industry and sent explorers and scientists to report on the



resources of his dominion, and financed foreigners to develop them. He forced education upon the Russian upper class, and drove its youth abroad to learn all European knowledge from philosophy to cookery. He corrected and simplified the Russian alphabet, introduced new technical terms, and had every important book translated into Russian. He was himself the first editor of a public newspaper. He transformed central institutions of government and enlarged local government and collective responsibility. He reformed the Church and made it take an active part in social life. He reformed manners, and forbade his courtiers to spit on the floor, talk with their mouths full, scratch their heads and sing too boisterously. Such was the scope of this tremendous being and withal, in all his long reign, there were not two successive years of peace.

He was genial and friendly but when he was furious" says Pares, "a sentry would be placed at the door to prevent anyone from approaching, while his wife Catherine, the only person who could calm him, would sit stroking his shaking head, and the courtiers waited with terror for the moment when they could speak to him with safety. He never allowed his autocracy to be questioned but he despised all the foibles and luxury of a court. At home writes Pares, "if he can be said to have had a home, he preferred simple quarters and lived in the simplest clothes, patched by his wife and daughters in the wilds of Russia, whichever humble cottage in which he might stop became the Palace. The peasants said of him. He works harder than any of us! Many of them saw him at close quarters, with his axe and his pipe. No Tsar had so clear an instinct of the good of the community as a whole. It shines through all his words and letters. Peter liked the peasants, he enjoyed being with them. he was a humane man when he had time to be humane. he was too able not to see the evils of the system, which had been bequeathed to him. But a life's furious

energy was hardly enough to do the task which he set himself ”

‘So he took no steps to abolish serfdom. Had he lived another ten years and had a long spell of peace, there was no man by temperament more fitted to effect emancipation. It was not beyond his powers, if only he had had the time. As it was, writes Pares, he established Russia as a European Power and, in spite of “a series of talentless, vulgar, and mostly foreign successors, the will of Peter held good. The structure of the State as he left it was in substance to remain until the revolution of 1917 ”

‘There were’, went on my friend rapidly, as if he feared an interruption on my part, ‘almost exactly two centuries between the death of Peter and the seizure of power by Vladimir Ilianov, the third Titan, who later called himself Lenin. It was he who pulled the peasants out of all trace of serfdom and carved Russia to a final unity. He was the true successor of Ivan and Peter, with a like passion for Russia as an entity, and a like terrible ruthlessness to all that stood in his way. All three Titans terrorized the upper classes into submission, but Lenin went further. He destroyed such of them as either failed to escape or refused to be converted to an equality with the millions. Those who could do something needful and were willing to accept his rule, he welcomed, but all others of all classes, whose higher social position was dependent upon the subordination of the millions, had as such to be eliminated before the true unity of Russia could be effected.

‘Lenin planned out a bloody road to his ideal of a general comradeship of the Russian people. This revolution did not arise out of a negative hatred but out of a well-defined vision of love. That mixture of humaneness and the terrible was in him as it was in his two titanic predecessors. In no man’s brain, as in Lenin’s, has such a vision provoked such cold, calculating certainty of action. In his years of exile he thought

out every imaginable *future* action every eventuality was foreshadowed. When the time for action came, he dazzled and bewitched his colleagues who paralysed by their apparently insuperable difficulties thought him to be a man like themselves, until he chose his moment to speak as one bathed in the light of a perfect understanding. His reading of the minds and purposes of the leaders of European nations his estimation of the quality of his opponents in the Civil War and finally the objects of his New Economic Policy were announced with a calm and complete clarity precisely at the moment when his colleagues felt that only a *miracle* could save them Lenin was that miracle. He constantly transcended what they thought possible, which, indeed, only proved itself possible by its practical success In the absorbed way in which, year by year day by day and hour by hour he flooded every crevice of his mind and will with the blaze of his purpose, there is no leader in history who equalled him except Peter One is aghast at the terrible nature of his ruthlessness and amazed at the stupendous character of his creation He re-created the Flatland from the Baltic and Black Seas to the Behring Straits, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Hindu Kush and the Tien Shan, and united it in the one whole which seemed to be destined by its character He, and his successor Stalin, completed the story of Russia's three Titans What a unique story it is!

We sat in silence for many minutes I myself stunned by what I had heard

Then my friend drew our meeting to a close with the words It is useless for us to apply our moral measures to this stupendous and even destined story It has happened It is ineffaceably written in the book of man's destiny It can never be blotted out, however much it may repel many by its cruelties and its horrors There have been other furious revolutions, such as that of the French, but none that have its fatality and achieved such positive results From the four

centuries of preparation, it is now complete, a new social building in the old, old world

‘Well, I see daylight has appeared I have talked away the hours of your necessary sleep The best of good nights, and thank you for your patience’

But I was not tired I felt strangely exhilarated on my way home I whistled and sang and even danced I suppose it was my friend’s avoidance of the discursive that so elated me

## XII

**I**t was a week before I was able to visit my friend again nevertheless, he began at once from where he had left off with the words

You gave your account of the literary bond, which framed the indigenous peculiarity of the Chinese people, and I gave the reasons of the malleability of the Russian millions.

It is against this background, I hazarded, that you now wish to discuss the people of India, and so to complete a review of three peoples who constitute together about a half of the total number of humanity

You have guessed correctly assented my friend. Against the two summaries of historic China and Russia, we have now to place India.

I think it will be difficult, I said India is made up of so many peoples and languages that one cannot so to speak make a précis of it.

On the contrary he replied, it is easier to present a summary of Indians than of any other people because, in the words of Emile Senhart, that great scholar "Caste exists only in India."

Here he paused and then repeated with great vigour "Indians then, have a unique peculiarity as unique as is the Chinese bond of literature."

He ceased speaking and rose to go to his bookshelves, whence he brought a volume bound in green cloth.

'This is Emile Senhart's famous essay *Caste in India*, translated by Sir Denison Ross in 1930, many years after it was written. You have read it, perhaps?'

I had to acknowledge I had not done so

'You must do so,' my friend continued. 'I will lend it to you. It is not an easy work to summarize, but summarized it must be. It is the best logical account of caste of which I know. Only a French scholar could have written it. It is so eminently sane in its learning, so related to facts as we know them now.

'Knowledge of India begins with the Vedas. The Aryans of the Vedas were a white people, who had crossed the lofty passes of the Hindu Kush and entered the Punjab plain. They conquered the dark-skinned natives and made some of them their labourers and servants. At the time of the Vedas, therefore, there were in the land four classes of people, such as were common to early communities, namely, warriors and nobles, priests, farmers, and merchants of the villages, and servants.

'India was not historical as was China, its history has to be discerned in the transitions of its literature. The literature that followed the Vedas, was the sacerdotal literature of the Upanishads and Brahmanas, written in a style differing from the archaic language of the Vedas. Its authors were priests, they were not historians.

'These priests of the Upanishad period had a deep reverence for the Vedic Hymns. They were also the originators of caste. They, therefore, read into the *classes* of the Vedic period, the warrior Kshatriyas, the priestly Brahmins, the middle-class Vaisya, and the dark-skinned Sudras the rigid condition of *caste*. One hymn in particular was hailed by them as proof of this. It is one of the latest of the Vedic Hymns and it reveals that the Universe issued in its entirety

from the substance of the primitive male, Purusha, and that "the Brahma was his mouth, the Rājanya (Kshatriya) his arms, the Vaisya his thighs, the Sudra his feet."

Nothing could be less warranted says Senhart, than this claim that the hymn proved that four rigid *castes* existed at the time of the Vedas. The hymn could clearly be referring to *classes* not *castes* and, Senhart states, in actual fact there is no allusion to caste in the Vedic Hymns.

Classes and castes have an inextinguishable difference classes are very few castes, as we know to-day almost innumerable. But the Brahmins, in their struggle to establish themselves in the first position in the State, turned communities, whether of family occupation, eponymous ancestry race or other reasons into castes with a number of religious prohibitions as regards marriage, purity food, and other social practices. As castes continue to this day and are to this date being created there is not the slightest difficulty in understanding this. Senhart sums up the position in these words "Here we put our finger on the true situation the names of Brahman Kshatriya Vaisya, and Sudra represent not four primitive *castes* but four *classes*. These classes may be exceedingly ancient it is only in later times that they have been superimposed on the castes. Different by nature and origin the true castes, or the organisms from which they sprang, were from the beginning more diverse and more numerous. This explanation alone accounts for the glaring incongruity apparent between fact and theory."

Senhart demonstrates that the four classes were similar to the classes in Persia, from which country the Aryans came.

It is here that comparison with the Iranian texts assumes its full value. Between the four Iranian *plshtras* and the four Hindu *varnas* the symmetry is significant. The Athravas or priests correspond to the Brahmins, the Rathaesthas or warriors to the Kshatriyas the Vastrya Fshuyants or head of families to the Vaisyas, and the Huitis or manual workers to

the Sudras The general resemblance is striking, and throws into the shade a few doubtful differences " He, then, proceeds to show the similarities of the Aryan-ruled Vedic community to the early Greek and Roman communities

'In the Vedic period there were then the four social classes There were the priests incessantly occupied with sacrificial acts and the composition of songs that accompanied them, there were the military, there were the people, always spoken of in the plural, and the clans who gathered round the chiefs at times of war, and, lastly, there were the subject peoples and servants The priests, the warriors, and the Aryan farmers and merchants of the villages, were all initiated with the sacred thread into the Vedic faith and so became the Twice Born The conquered peoples, the Sudras, wore no sacred thread

'The Vedic period of classes was followed by the period in which the priests were asserting ascendancy and assuring it by their formation of castes The so-called law books, then written, says Senhart, "not only reserve for the Brahmans all the influential functions and privileges, but also invariably graduate the scale of criminal punishment in their favour " And again "The care that their books take, at all times, from the Vedic Hymns onwards, to establish the dogmas of their superiority in the strongest and most extravagant terms, shows clearly the persevering labour that has been necessary to ensure its success "

'It was only by the utmost tenacity', went on my friend, 'that the priests succeeded, but with each century their dominance increased It became eventually supreme and unquestioned, *caste ruled India* The theory of metempsychosis, or rebirth, gave caste a spiritual inevitability According to metempsychosis, the rank of each individual in life was determined by his previous births, social ranks corresponding faithfully to the infinite degree of good and evil in past lives Only by a countless succession of rebirths or by com-



plete abnegation of what is to us the real world, but to the Hindus is Maya or Illusion, could freedom from rebirth be attained.

Caste became supreme the Brahmans themselves did not escape it. The *Brahman*, as such, is a class, but the *Brahmans* are divided like the rest of the people into a great number of castes. Sir William Hunter states there are no fewer than 1 866 separate Brahmanical tribes. Many Brahmans are water-carriers, sepoy in the army merchants, farmers (provided they did not handle the plough, which was a caste offence) scribes, shepherds, masons, religious beggars, chair porters, and were, therefore, separated by the castes of occupation from the Brahmanical priests and ascetics. But the prestige of these separated Brahmans remained even though their profession was that of robbery as was that of the Sanauriya Brahmans of Bundelkhand, of whom Senhart said "It is true that they only follow it (robbery) by day and the respect of the Hindus for the Brahmans goes so far that, if one is to believe a perhaps ironical proverb to be robbed by them should be regarded as a favour from heaven."

The number of castes in India is very great—official statistics are not reliable and fall far short of the truth. Senhart counted over 120 in the district of Poona of 900 000 people, and the greater part of these were broken up into subdivisions resembling so many distinct castes, despising each other and refusing intermarriage and common feeding. The chief caste offences are those of marriage, of customs, of feeding, of drinking water outside the caste, but even the outcaste offender still finds a place and joins other outcastes as a refuge. Many pariahs or untouchables "are not deterred from holding a high opinion of themselves they find neighbours to look down upon," says Senhart.

What this division and subdivision in India means cannot be realized by the British, who have not lived in India. I

think in no department of human life can the effect of caste appear more odd than in that of romance Sex in Britain pervades its society, its literature, its festivities, its romance It is impossible for the British to think of a society without it But romance rarely visits the caste sexes of India, where marriages are arranged in the childhood of the parties and are consummated as soon as nature permits If, in spite of all care, romance does visit a man and woman, and if conjugal infidelity is discovered, the punishment is ostracism, and, it may be, death, without the vindictive husband incurring the disapproval of his fellows The degree to which group is locked from group is amazing Men, who should be united by occupation in the same place, nevertheless hold aloof from each other owing to caste prejudices Even the effect of the British is very slight "Doubtless this infiltration and imitation of European ideas is extremely superficial," says Senhart, "it has not penetrated very far into the lower strata of this immense and tenacious population " Yet he adds "But once the higher castes are shaken, they may rapidly bring down the system," which depends on the Brahmanic class that alone maintains some sort of unity in the vast complexity

'Now what does this division mean in the wider issues of what we call national life? That is the question which makes the effect of caste of such supreme importance at the present Senhart answers this with Gallic clarity "In classical antiquity the slow fusion of the classes is at once the stimulant and the result of civic and political ideas"—what we have called in our talks the civic sense "In India", he continues, "the theocratic power blocks all evolution in this direction, and India has never attained to the idea of the State or the fatherland

"The Aryans of India and those of the classic world", (of Greece and Rome), says Senhart, "started from the same origins How different were the développments in the two

cases! In the beginning there were the same groups governed by the same beliefs and usages. In Greece and Italy these little societies joined together and organized themselves into an ordered system. Each group preserved its complete autonomy in its own sphere of action, but the higher federation, which constituted the city upheld common interests and co-ordinated common action. Chaos took shape under the touch of the Greeks—isolated organisms were resolved into a wider unity and as it was perfected, the new idea which was its latent soul, the political idea, began to take shape. It showed itself capable of expansion and of leaping barriers which had supported but also confined its first steps. Later it was to suffice in modified form for the needs of the most profound revolutions in life and government.”

In India there has been none of this civic growth. “What ever it may have borrowed from external and historic circumstances” summarizes Senhart with great profundity (to emphasize which my friend stood up and raised his finger) “the caste is clearly the fruit of the Hindu mind. The social organization of India is to the structure of the antique cities what a Hindu poem is to a Greek tragedy. In practical life as well as in art the Hindu genius rarely shows itself capable of organization—that is to say of measure and harmony.

Here my friend broke away from reading the book. That seems to me he went on to throw a remarkable illumination on Indian music and its lack of measure and harmony—the explanation of which so long bothered me that—My friend now caught my eye. “I see the red light warning me of discursiveness,” he said with a laugh.

He resumed his seat and went on reading from Senhart’s essay. In the caste it has exhausted all its efforts in maintaining and strengthening a network of closed groups, without common action or mutual reaction, recognizing in the long run no other motive power than the unchecked

authority of a sacerdotal class which has constituted itself the people's sole director Under the levelling rule of Brahmanism the castes move as the episodes jostle one another haphazard in the vague unity of an epic narrative It is enough that an artificial system masks their incoherence

“The destinies of caste are, rightly considered, an instructive chapter in the psychology of India ”

He closed the book ‘That is the end, “an instructive chapter in the psychology of India ” I should think it is that! Senhart is a pilot of genius who lifts us in his aeroplane so that we see the whole picture from above Everything, not only the music which you will not let me discuss, becomes clear The absence of civic and political sense amongst the Hindus, the failures in organization, the fact that no political constitution was evolved even in conception, the theocratic block to any such conceptions, the inability of the present politicians to rise above a “Quit India” attitude, the saying Yes, Yes, and acting No, No, combine, the paralysis of the Islamic brotherhood of men and the failure of the Indian Moslems to develop anything approaching the Arabic-Persian Abbaside civilization, the impenetrable secrecy of the Hindu home, the suggested aping of Russia by the Indian industrial planners of India's immediate future, the depression of the peasantry, the repetition of the early miseries of the Industrial Era, the failure of the British to understand Hindus, their offer of a democratic constitution on a British model——’ Here my friend, as if to release himself of his elation, rose to his feet and walked up and down in a burst of uproarious laughter, and then, as if ashamed, stopped suddenly, returned to his seat, and continued quietly ‘All is laid before us by Monsieur Senhart as one sees a country from a plane It is marvellous We were right in our first talk to begin with the olds and not with the news One can know nothing unless one reviews the present in the light of the past ’

## XIII

**O**n the next occasion of meeting, my friend asked me how my mind stood as the result of our talks.

I am glad you ask me this I answered, for I am, as a fact, slightly bewildered. In the last three talks on China, Russia, and India, we have leapt away from the small, I might say trifling, examples of the daily differences between *Indians* and *British*, but now I seem to see the three great peoples the Chinese, the Russian and the Hindn separated in their historic characters as if by profound chasms. Each is tremendously itself and to erect bridges from one to the other seems, as I think it, an impossible task. Yet that is what the opening up of the world by modern technique demands or seems to demand. It is the contrast between the demand and its feasibility that bewilders me.

You put it well, declared my friend. There does seem to be a middling intellect, with its limit to a simple idea and aim, fostered by financiers, politicians, and merchants, to use the technical unity of the world its wireless and its aeroplanes, to transform the varying groups of men or nationalities into a number of similar factories and markets whereby all men will live in the luxury of an abundance of this world's goods. It seems on the surface a reasonable aim. Its only fault is its shallowness. It does not go below the surface.

Here I took up the thread 'That brings us back', I said, 'to these great chasms, these canyons, which the constant flow of the centuries have dug out and which separate the nationalities. How, I ask in my bewilderment, are we to reconcile two such entire opposites as the industrial unity of the world and the existence of profoundly different nationalities? Looking at the present, with the frightful destruction of homes, cities, communications and so on, it seems that our fathers' and grandfathers' devout faith in free trade, progress, and the rest were completely phantasmagoric and have landed us not only in two great wars, but in a condition of underlying war, of invention of the most wonderful, diabolical, and devastating machines, without any leaders of mind and intellect that can get us out of our subjection to the machine. When the initial release of the European War is over, it will be realized that the safest protection against the terrible engines of the air will be to build well-stocked cities underground as well as or even in preference to above ground. I cannot imagine that the madness of our present values can lead to any less drastic logical results.'

'You speak well, my boy, you speak well,' exclaimed my friend. 'And you approach very closely to a view of caste which our friend and philosopher, Monsieur Senhart, omitted. Out of the negativism of the Hindu mind, as a part of the fruit of the Hindu mind as Senhart himself called it, there is a positivism which he overlooked.'

'Senhart and you and I are all westerners, and we have to free ourselves from western values and adopt Hindu values to see the positivism of Hindu caste. Let us attempt to do so. We shall be able to do so, if we first appreciate the doctrine of Maya or Illusion.'

'I was looking under the microscope lately at a male mosquito and I saw, springing from its head, a delicate, symmetrical and really beautiful tiny candelabrum, a central rod and a number of regularly interspaced branches. This,

I thought, is what nature provides that the wee insect may be aware of the immediate environment in which he finds himself and from which he has to gain his advantage and his safety. Then, I went out and looked at the star-strewn heavens of a clear Indian night, and I thought of our little planet amidst all these mighty spheres and of my own trifling and ephemeral existence upon it, and so I realized again the doctrine of Maya. The Vedanta, the Veda's final teaching, unquestionably is possessed of an inevitable truth. We know nothing of the meaning of life, the Vedanta teaches we shall never read its enigma. What we see *is* Maya, Illusion it is what we as individuals as human beings with our human equipment, *see* that we call *real*, but it is quite different to the brief world which the antennae of the mosquito present to that insect. We know nothing at all of the intellect that exists in the universe outside our planet. Nothing, nothing nowhere have we access to the meaning of these vast spaces and their brilliant stars. But Maya plays with us. Because we spend a little time in a tiny circle of consciousness, Maya surrounds us with Illusion and smothers our atman or soul, which alone is reality. For throughout the universe, there is something that makes it a universe and an entity something that is everywhere and in everything. This universal soul is Brahman and is the reality behind phenomena. Our soul or atman is a part of this Reality and our true purpose is to perceive and comprehend this by freeing ourselves from the cloud of illusions which hides the Brahman from us. This we can do by knowledge and meditation.

Such is the doctrine of the Vedanta, the final meaning of the Veda, and to my mind it is indisputable. We may not be able to make much out of it, but as a philosophic pronouncement upon life, I, for one, find it beyond argument. Looking at the mosquito's antennae and then at the stars, I find no other possible answer to their joint question.

I am more puzzled by metempsychosis, or the Doctrine

of Rebirth, which is also a fundamental dogma of both Brahmanism and Buddhism. Buddhism broke away from Brahmanism by rejecting the Vedic sacrifices of the Vedanta and by rejecting caste. In modern terms, we would say that Buddhism was too humane to allow the ruthless sacrifice of innocent animals in the name of religion and to permit any of the children of creation to be despised by the principles of caste. Gautama, the Buddha, is said to have begun preaching his doctrine of Enlightenment in 522 B C, and Buddhism continued in India till the tenth century A D. Yet, though Gautama rejected the Veda with the sacrifices of animals and the caste system, though out of his pitying heart he taught kindness to animals and respect for all that was living, and though he was as ready to accept Sudras and fallen women and barbarians as his followers, as he was to accept men of proud birth and women of strict chastity, yet he joined with Brahmanism in the doctrine of Metempsychosis. The sins that the atman committed in previous lives were the cause of sufferings in the present life and the virtues of the atman in previous lives were rewarded by the joys of this life. Enlightenment meant such saturation, through knowledge, with this doctrine that a sinless life could be led and the atman thereby escape further rebirths and become dissolved in the Universal Soul.

'In this doctrine, then, Gautama was one with the Brahmans and as a consequence he taught reverence for the Brahmans. He was not the enemy, but the friend of the sincere Brahmans and so he did not abolish caste amongst their followers. For over a thousand years, the tolerant Buddhism lived side by side in friendship with Brahmanism in India, as it has lived side by side with Confucianism and Taoism in China, and with Shintoism in Japan. It is true that, under powerful Buddhist Emperors, such as was Asoka, himself of Sudra extraction, Buddhism was the dominant faith of a great part of India from the Punjab to Bengal.



and reaching into the Deccan south of the Vindhya Mountains, which divide north and south India. But Brahmanism and caste were not driven out. Buddhism, the most tolerant of the great religions, was free from such bigotry.

But, in the course of years, for reasons I have never been able to learn from the literature, Buddhism between A.D. 700 and 900 declined, and Brahmanism, popularized by the adoption of a gentler spirit initiated by Buddhism—and now called *Hinduism* by Hunter and others—grew in popularity and finally in the tenth century Buddhism disappeared from India, except for a remnant in Eastern Bengal on the borders of Buddhistic Burma. Once more caste became supreme.

It is an extraordinary story almost unique, in its tenacity in view of the fact that Buddhism showed that Indians could hold the central doctrines of Maya and Rebirth without caste. Yet, after over 1 000 years, caste regained its supremacy. I think, then, one can only account for it, not only by the tenacity of the highly intellectual Brahmans, but as the fruit of the Hindu mind. It suited the Hindus by limiting the circle of experience to the limitations of the minds of the masses. That mass was limited in the main by the large family system, and caste was but an enlargement of the limitations of the large family. Caste, by limiting marriage, occupations, feeding and drinking amongst its fellows only itself formed a larger family and it allowed for the masses—a host of local gods. It did not build a nation and therefore, as a nation, the Hindus could not resist foreign conquerors but at the same time, it shielded the Hindus from those national catastrophes under which many a civic empire and many a nation of people have been totally extinguished in history. Caste survives, and in modern jargon, it might be called the fittest system, for it has led to the survival of the Aryans and their subject peoples, substantially in the same relations, for an immense series of centuries.

One can moreover say that, by sheltering small com

munities and limiting the vicissitudes of life to minor, if constant, alterations in caste itself, it secured a humble happiness, because it kept the people from changes outside the sphere of their understanding. Since the dominant Brahmanical conception of life was to avoid its sufferings, it can be said that the Brahmans succeeded to a remarkable degree. The system they maintained was, by their measures, a profound intellectual achievement and to look with contempt upon it is a grave failure in thought.

‘With the revolutions of time’, continued my friend, ‘came westernism, and, with what some may call the irony of fate, it came in the form of the chief exponents of the small family system and its individualism, the English. Between the two peoples, the Hindus and the English, therefore, there was a great historic chasm, such as needed a large number of Munros for it to be bridged. Nevertheless, if westernism had to come, I believe the Hindus were fortunate. I say with conviction, that there are no men of, in the main, more decent feeling than the English. Fair play is one of the finest heritages of a large number of English. In India they have been, in general, moderate and well-intentioned and they have introduced an invaluable civic honesty, previously unknown to India. In so far as Indians can now claim to have a dawning civic sense, and many have begun to look upon India as their motherland, it is due to the English. India as an entity is the creation of the English.’

‘How deep is this influence now upon India as a whole?’ Senhart himself discusses this question. First he speaks of the haughty contempt that the Hindus have for the *Mlechchhas* or English barbarians, whom they regard as outcasts. Nevertheless, “relations of every sort with these barbarians, so greatly superior in civilization, are not only frequent, but even appear honourable and flattering. The vanity of imitation incessantly undermines traditional instinct and its scruples. Meat finds its way to the table of many Brahmans,

pollution contracted by a voyage and by the infractions which it entails is no longer regarded as calamitous. On every side rules are relaxing, custom is weakened, and gradually from one small group to another the movement of evolution is discerned." And then he goes on to say what I read out to you at our last meeting, about the infiltration and imitation of European *ideas* being extremely superficial.

That is the point. Imitation there is imitation there must be, but has there been any definite increase of civic sense? Has the chasm between the English and the Hindus been so effectively bridged that the promised self-government will be genuinely inspired by a general civic sense or will it be Aping? I have no doubt at all myself of the answer. Our recent talks have given the answer without any hesitation. It will not, it cannot, be inspired by a general civic sense. It will be an imitation adopted by various powerful groups with the object of their own aggrandizement, whether those groups be political or industrial or religious or combinations of two or three of them.

We have, then, to attempt to outline a western advance of India based on the historic character of India. That is our task, but we will leave its further development to our next talk.

## XIV

I propose to jump into our subject straight away,' said my friend, when we had seated ourselves on the veranda for a talk

'And what is our subject?' I inquired

'We spoke of it last time,' my friend answered 'An advance to modernism on Indian lines'

'And how do you propose to jump into it?' I questioned with a smile

His answer surprised me. He stood up and announced in a loud voice 'The huge factory towns of modernism will be too brutal in India. Those that now exist are awful enough'

Then he turned angrily upon me and asked 'Have you read the *Report of the Royal Commission of Labour in India, 1929?*' I nodded 'Were you surprised', he continued, 'that *A Plan of Economic Development for India* by seven Indian capitalists never mentioned it? Have you been surprised that no reference is ever made to it in the Press? Have you noted that even the able and bold Dr Ambedkhar does not make it the basis of his speeches on the future of Labour? Can you explain why it has been ostracized? Are you astonished that our Viceroy, Lord Wavell, in a speech to the Associated Chambers of Commerce, Calcutta, wisely told his hearers to read economic history and acquaint themselves with the deplorable conditions of the early industrial

era, but did not seem to have read the *Report*? Are you amazed that the Governor of Bengal expressed his horrified surprise at what he saw in the purlicues of Calcutta, while the whole ghastly story had been revealed in the *Report* fifteen years before? Does anyone in authority read *Reports* of Royal Commissions? What does it all mean?

With an amazing speed of word, he peppered me with these questions like a vocal machine-gun. I felt quite overwhelmed.

I have read the *Report* and its horror has never left me, I asserted.

My friend strode to a bookcase and took the *Report* from it, and seated himself. By experience, I believed I was now destined to hear a quiet discourse. But it was not to be. He talked, it is true, in a more moderate voice, but it was frequently raised to an agitated energy. I have seldom seen him more moved.

I have been, I confess, tortured in my mind by what I have read of the early days of Industrialism in England. I have often wondered what sort of expiation would be exacted from the British employing class for the horrible treatment of children in those days. None has as yet appeared nor, I presume, will appear and the tragedy of the past has been slowly smoothed out by the increasing activity of the ingrained civic sense of the British. But that cheering process has not yet, nor will it ever wipe out the effect of such an essay as Mr. William Clark's *Fabian Essay on the British miners* of scarcely more than a century ago. Here are his own words: "The most terrible condition of things happened in the mines, where children of both sexes worked together half naked for often sixteen hours a day. In the foetid passages, children of seven, six, and even four years of age were found at work. Women and young children drew coal along the passages of the mines, crawling on all fours with a girdle passing round their waists, harnessed by a

chain between the legs to the cart A sub-commissioner in Scotland reported that he 'found a little girl, six years of age, carrying half a hundredweight and making fourteen journeys a day The height ascended and the distance along the road exceeded in each journey the height of Saint Paul's cathedral' The ferocity of the men was worse than wild beasts, and children were often maimed and sometimes killed with impunity Drunkenness was naturally general Short lives and brutal ones were the rule The men, it was said, "die off like rotten sheep, and each generation is commonly extinct after fifty" Such was a large part of England under the unrestrained rule of the capitalist'

'Those words are burnt ineradicably into my memory They can never be effaced, they can never be merged in the general forgetfulness that has blotted out those dreadful days from the consciousness of the present generation But I, for one, can never forget them, and, although they could not be repeated in England and were dealt with efficiently as the civic sense became more and more averse to them, yet in India, where Industrialism in its early stages is in being, they must be vividly called back to the memory That is why I am grateful to Lord Wavell for recalling them in his speech to the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta on the 14th of December 1944 "I read", he said, "some time ago a description of the manufacturing slums of the Victorian Era, which painted the evils of the period with a ghastly pen" It may have been the account in the last edition of Green's *Short History of the English People*, but, whatever it was, it could not be more ghastly than what William Clark wrote and I have just read out to you

'Often and often I have imagined a loved child of six or seven, under another fate drawing a cart along a narrow, climbing passage in a mine I have seen that beloved child as it then would be, its fairness dirtied and begrimed, the sweat standing upon the forehead and smearing courses

down the cheeks, the eyes starting with the strain like the eyes of an overstrained beast, the childish lips spoilt for a caress by the filth upon them and the dryness of harsh breath and, in actual fact, one could have seen thousands of such children in mines and factories, treated not with kindness as Indian children are almost invariably treated, but with ferocity. I have to bawl at them to keep them awake, deposed a Mr Leach before the Children's Employment Commission.

Hence, the danger of Industrialism in India led by industrialists is to me fraught with danger and I reply to it with all the vigour of my mind with a categorical No! however much they hope with their crores of rupees to put a good face on what has been a fatality in history.

Let us open the *Royal Commissioners' Report on Labour* and see what was happening in India in 1929. In small factories of under twenty persons the Factory Acts did not apply. The decency of these factories, therefore, depends on the civic sense of those who run them. As there was no civic sense amongst the employers nor any protective body such as a trades union on the part of the workers, these small factories provided pictures for a ghastly pen.

The Commissioners visited a number of them, amongst them small tanneries, and wrote. In every case we were struck by the lack of adequate sanitary arrangements, which make the bulk of such places even more offensive than is inevitable from the nature of the industry. Adequate drainage was absent. Often the whole earth floor space, spread over a wide area, was littered with heaps of evil smelling refuse and sodden with pools of filthy water. There were no washing arrangements and in the majority of cases there was no latrine accommodation. In the majority of instances the workers had no alternative but to eat the food they had brought in the midst of such surroundings. Hours were long, often twelve, and sometimes in excess of twelve, and where-

as few women were employed, in the Madras Presidency children of from eight to twelve were found at work in the vats and elsewhere. Their hours sometimes exceeded those for adults owing to the necessity of performing additional tasks such as water carrying, vat filling, etc." In these and other small factories "it was clear to us from the evidence that these children were in the position of being obliged to work any number of hours per day, required of them by their masters. They were without the protection of the law as regards their physical fitness for labour, the number of hours they might be required to work, without any intervals, or indeed, any of the rare elementary protections afforded by the Factories Act, in respect of child workers."

"Even in the best type of mill, the Commissioners received this evidence from women workers. "We get up at 4 o'clock in the morning to do our household work so that we may be ready to go to the mill at 7 o'clock. We work in the mill from 7 in the morning to 5.30 in the evening. We then go home and work till 10 o'clock in our houses. We barely have any time to rest."

"The atmosphere in which these mill hands have to work, in jute or cotton mills, is full of fine fluff, which clings to the hair and eyebrows of the workers. In cotton mills an artificial humidity has to be maintained, often by the use of live steam.

"Their wretched homes are approached by "the narrow tunnels of filth" of Howrah, "the filthy trenches" of Cawnpore, the "streams of sewage that filter over the pathways" in Madras. In Bombay, in 1922, the Bombay Labour Office found that 97 per cent of the working-class lived in one-room tenements with as many as six to nine persons in one room. "The crowding on the floor space, the smoke and smells from the cooking, the food eaten amid a chaos of pots and pans, old clothes, bedding and crawling children, the heavy, foetid air, the utter absence of privacy for ordinary needs as





ticularly disastrous. Even if we get objective men on the top, they have no time in their brief tenures of office to devise and watch over the necessary changes. That out-and-out objective man, the great Thomas Munro, became Governor of Madras in 1820, and he was Governor until his death from cholera in 1827. He came to India when he was eighteen and, except for a spell in England between 1806-14, he was continuously in India for forty-one years. He wrote his first great *Minute* in 1807 and it was due to his profound knowledge and the recovery of his health that he willingly returned to India in 1814 to live amongst the people until his death. He had time, then, to do a great deal for India and he did it. He was the first Governor to give Indians, by hereditary concerned with revenue, responsible posts in his own revenue department, for, he said, they have been all their lives accustomed to such inquiries. He gave them better pay in return for their accepting a training to enable them to work with English officials. He founded the Maharatta Kutchery of the Board of Revenue, which was still existing in 1880. He started a small school for training teachers for public instruction, but was hampered by being allowed for it but half a lac a year, the income of a well-to-do man. Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, editor of his *Minutes*, holds that Munro failed to round up his great conception of government at that time with its final creation of an able College to train Indian officials because of this miserable allowance. Nevertheless he was able to defeat the extension of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal to Madras and to preserve its native ryotwari system. Madras had for centuries its peasant proprietorship with hereditary revenue officials, from whom each ruler, whether hereditary successor or usurper, received the revenue. The ryots, in short, managed their own affairs. They met together to decide on the allocation of land, on cultivation, crops, the payment of revenue, etc., and Munro saved this system for them. "The tendency of the Indian system of

## XV

I looked forward to our next meeting with intense interest. What was my friend going to propose? I turned this question over and over again in my mind, but so insuperable were the difficulties that presented themselves to me that my mind failed me. It could not be that my friend was going to suggest the revival of caste with its religious licence in idol worship its restrictions in human association, its limitation of marriage, and its strict rules of caste feeding and drinking. I knew how my friend regarded these aspects of caste as condemned by the opening up of India to the modern world, an opening much widened by the experiences of the millions of gallant men and women who took an active national share in the recent war. I failed totally to anticipate what he was going to say.

He began by saying. One of Goethe's very last sayings to Eckermann was. I hate all bungling like sin especially in State affairs from which nothing but ill to thousands and millions results. He paused, then continued. Nothing but ill comes to thousands and millions. That is the essence. In great changes we have to start with the thousands and millions, but bunglers start the wrong way up.

I believe this is inescapable from the very nature of the high Government of India. The top men including the Viceroy are always changing. In times of transition this is par-

ticularly disastrous. Even if we get objective men on the top, they have no time in their brief tenures of office to devise and watch over the necessary changes. That out-and-out objective man, the great Thomas Munro, became Governor of Madras in 1820, and he was Governor until his death from cholera in 1827. He came to India when he was eighteen and, except for a spell in England between 1806-14, he was continuously in India for forty-one years. He wrote his first great *Minute* in 1807 and it was due to his profound knowledge and the recovery of his health that he willingly returned to India in 1814 to live amongst the people until his death. He had time, then, to do a great deal for India and he did it. He was the first Governor to give Indians, by hereditary concerned with revenue, responsible posts in his own revenue department, for, he said, they have been all their lives accustomed to such inquiries. He gave them better pay in return for their accepting a training to enable them to work with English officials. He founded the Maharatta Kutchery of the Board of Revenue, which was still existing in 1880. He started a small school for training teachers for public instruction, but was hampered by being allowed for it but half a lac a year, the income of a well-to-do man. Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, editor of his *Minutes*, holds that Munro failed to round up his great conception of government at that time with its final creation of an able College to train Indian officials because of this miserable allowance. Nevertheless he was able to defeat the extension of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal to Madras and to preserve its native ryotwari system. Madras had for centuries its peasant proprietorship with hereditary revenue officials, from whom each ruler, whether hereditary successor or usurper, received the revenue. The ryots, in short, managed their own affairs. They met together to decide on the allocation of land, on cultivation, crops, the payment of revenue, etc., and Munro saved this system for them. "The tendency of the Indian system of

castes and laws of inheritance he said, always has been and must be, to keep the land divided into small portions amongst the ryots, and to make the same person labourer farmer and landlord." Why then, "attempt to subvert an ancient system which places the great body of the ryots above want, renders them industrious, frugal and comfortable, and preserves the simplicity of their manners and their respect for public authority?"

Mnnro was no bungler. He started from the base and worked upwards. He was resolutely opposed to Aping to fanciful theories founded on European models" as he put it, and he saved the Indian system in his province. Its effects in the forwardness of Madras amongst provinces is seen to this day. His great principle of government was Learn the customs of the people and shape your government in accord with them.

Now let me turn to another great statesman, the late President Roosevelt. You will see my reason for this as I continue. In September 1937 Roosevelt dedicated the Bonneville Dam upon the Columbia River in the Pacific North west of the United States. Lower down the course of the river was the huge Grand Coulee Dam. These two dams opened up by irrigation a great area of land and an enormous amount of electric power for factories.

The President in his speech announced that the North west should not be a land of great factory towns. It was not to be a land of new Pittsburgs. It is because I am thinking of the nation and the region fifty years from now that I venture the further prophecy that as time passes we will do everything in our power to encourage the building up of the smaller communities of the United States. To-day many people are beginning to realize that there is an inherent weakness in cities, which become too large, and inherent strength in a wider geographical distribution of the population.

'Note the term "inherent strength" A very great predecessor of Roosevelt went further "I view great cities as pestilential to the health, the morals, and the liberties of man" I am, myself, in agreement with President Jefferson, particularly in relation to India. Calcutta has become the curse of Bengal, Bombay overwhelms its presidency, and Karachi stultifies the native rural character of Sind Kemal Ataturk did well to choose Angora as his capital in place of Constantinople I would here coin two aphorisms for your memory The first is Life's truths are rare visitors to the cities, the second is The money of great cities is the enemy of the soil

'I have now reached my proposal for the necessary industrialization of India It is this It must be allotted to and connate with the smaller communities of India This is not an Aping of President Roosevelt India is essentially the country of smaller communities, and I choose the word "connate" to show that I intend industry to be born from and with the essential characteristic of the country

'Here I accept with sincere gratitude an article by Mr C H Parr, Imperial Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi, which appeared in *Indian Farming*, August 1944'

My friend took the magazine from the table and placed it upon his knees

'Mr Parr', he said, 'begins with a sketch of the evils that over-urbanization has upon agricultural India, that evil which the astute Trotsky summed up under the one word "scissors" "Studying the graph of agricultural and industrial prices," writes Sir John Maynard, "Trotsky's eye was caught by the uneven divergence of the two lines from the norm, and he said that they resembled a steadily widening expansion of a pair of scissors" The incomes of the Russian farmers, except in the surplus grain areas, were so small they could not buy industrial goods In the surplus-producing south and south-eastern European Russia, the farmers

limited grain production so as to ensure high prices of grains to match the high prices of industrial goods. The production of both goods and grains, therefore, fell far short of the maximum. We will not, however concern ourselves further with Maynard's valuable deductions, but return to scissors as evidenced in India, one blade being rural, one urban.

Almost all modern attention has been paid to the urban population and the rural has sunk under the load. Rural India has paid the piper but urban India has called the tune. The blades of the scissors are wide apart. It is the object of Mr Parr though he is evidently unaware of Trotsky's graphic symbol, to bring the blades closer together.

Of India's total population says Mr Parr about 90 per cent are rural and dependent on agriculture and ancillary occupations, yet, he continues, agriculture, owing to the seasonal nature of its major operations, cannot give employment to its own farm labour for more than a third of the year. Even the tenant cultivator himself is more or less idle for half the year."

This clearly means that there is a very huge amount of unused labour in India, the poverty of which is one of the paralytic plants of the politicians. I, myself would add that this is also due to occupational caste, with its rigid restriction of men to one type of work.

Is it really necessary asks Mr Parr "that the industry should continue to create its own town population, with special problems and demands for special amenities, leaving the rural population which pays in no small measure for these amenities, underemployed, half productive, and therefore half fed and half-nourished without the ability to play its proper part as a consumer of the very articles which the city is anxious to produce and sell?"

Must the scissors have such widely divergent blades? Cannot the gap between be so overcome that it ceases to

exist? Of course this is possible, if only we can get rid of the bunglers, the muddling men of middling talent

‘Mr Parr continues “Let heavy industries be located near the source of their raw materials, but let the production of articles for the home market (which is largely the rural market) be distributed as rationally and systematically as possible throughout the areas which provide the said market and which can also provide the required labour ”

‘That is the very heart of the proposal,’ declared my friend in an emphatic tone ‘It is different from Mr Roosevelt’s, but then Mr Roosevelt was opening up new territory The Pacific North-west method was to have “postage-stamp rates” for the electric power of the dams, which means that, however far a locality was from the source of power, it paid the same rates as did one in the vicinity of the dam itself Farms were to be small, and those working on the farms were also to work the local factories The urban people were no longer to be divorced from the soil and so a great sin of the bunglers expiated

‘Mr Parr’s solution is essentially Indian It is based on small communities, almost, indeed, on large families He goes on to a very clear-sighted vision of the benefit that could be extracted from the War He points out that farming is now helped by mechanical and electrical knowledge Sowing and reaping in an uncertain climate can be speeded up by the use of small tractors, electric light and cooking are domestic time-savers, refrigerators prevent wastage of food, good tools are beneficial All these articles could be manufactured in the countryside where they would be used by men living in the farming villages who have some mechanical and electrical knowledge This knowledge the soldiers have acquired in the War

‘But let us return to Mr Parr’s own words “The present war”, he writes, “is a highly mechanized affair and a considerable number of men from rural areas have received



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intensive training in the mechanical arts. Many of these men will have acquired sufficient skill to be turned to good account in the post war development of rural industry

‘If centralization of industry is continued in the future as in the past, there will be many misfortunes,’ says Mr Parr. There will be insufficient funds for public services in the countryside those in industry will be too distant from a proper supply of fruits, milk, and dairy products and, what is of vital importance, the soil will continue to be starved of its natural foods, the public refuse and waste products, which should be returned to it as composted manure.

Now as regards local government of these areas Mr Parr does not deal with this, but we clearly have to do so. We have the very substance of it in the centuries-old habits of India. They always had associative self-government, if one must use a phrase which moderns understand. The large family system was associatively governed far more so in fact than the small family in which the father was essentially the master. But the large family has enough adults to make association work. The head of the family constitutes the final authority but he is much more influenced by the general opinion of the family than the father of a small family is by his children. The father of the small family may be kindly and indulgent, but if he chooses to play the tyrant, he has no opposition.

With its large families, the village, which is composed of several such families, is associative, whether it be the Mir of pre-revolutionary Russia or the Indian village with its *panchayat*. All gather together to discuss common questions in a familiar and friendly way. It is Mackenzie Wallace, I think, who tells us that the Russian peasants are very affectionate to one another. When they meet to discuss village affairs everyone can have his say. They often get so excited and loud that it seems, to the outsider that they must come

to blows But nothing of the sort happens Somehow the general opinion emerges above the din, and soon everyone is happy with a decision that no-one disputes It was the same with the Indian ryots Not even caste was able to make insuperable barriers and, in quite recent times, we know that Brahman, Vaishya, Sudra, and Moslem—all the classes of the village in fact—decided on village affairs with mutual fellowship The associative spirit, the civic spirit in a small sphere, is amongst their inevitable creations, if they are left to themselves If let alone they have, in fact, within them the inevitability of forming what Sir John Maynard so well terms, “democracy *upon the lower* or the local plane, a living constitution, with no formal procedure, for those things which come within the range of the experience of the ordinary man” —

‘There is, then, in India an untapped source of true democracy, a far more radical one than that of the urban crowds, which can be forced by the propaganda-press, cajoled, bribed or frightened into voting for ambitious and self-seeking candidates, in spite of British methods intended to produce a fair vote in each voter It is far more genuine than the “organized public opinion”, which, with such persistent subjectivity, the British look upon as the voice to shape the future of all India It is the rich men, the place-hunters, the socialists, and other parties, whom the British conjure into being by their methods, but not the associative or civic sense

‘That indigenous associative sense, which organizes the personal security of individuals into the joint security of groups, is the sense upon which the future countryside could be built in spite of the intrusion of such a power-force as modern industrialism The associative sense of the Indian village has been respected and supported by a number of great rulers, including of course our four M’s The Royal Commission on Decentralization in India in 1909, were in

no doubt about it. "We are of the opinion" they wrote, "that the foundation of any stable edifice which shall associate the people with the administration must be the village as being of much greater antiquity than administrative creations such as the tahsils, and one in which the people are known to one another and have interests which coalesce on well recognized objects."

To adapt industry to an extension of the village system with its great antiquity will be the indigenous or true Indian way of its establishment whereas to break up the villages by forcing individuals out of them into great industrial cities, there to form an urban proletariat, is to my mind a diabolical act for the specific reason that in India there is no general civic sense. We have shown that this is so again and again in our earlier talks, and we know the horrors that are now resulting and will result from this. It will I say be diabolical in its results and it would be doubly diabolical for us, who know to support it. The Indians themselves, of course, are not aware that they lack the civic sense, for the simple reason that they do not know what it is. They recognize it in the British to the degree that they lay claim to it as if it were more or less natural to all men. But, when they come to display it as they themselves believe, it is at once apparent that they have not got it. They think of themselves, of their families, of their castes of their communities. But, in the democracy upon the lower or the local plane of Maynard they have it excellently developed. Here is a statement of a very sympathetic Indian official, Lt.-Colonel S. J. Thomson in *The Real Indian People* 1914 of the people of Bundelkhand. "The rural inhabitants of the district were simple law-abiding people with whom we were on excellent terms, and the headmen, usually small landowners, were as dignified courteous, and intelligent in pursuit of their special occupations as the class almost invariably is and again. The small landowners, the headmen of the villages and the

peasantry are the backbone of the State. They were never a match for the trading-classes in chicane, and nowadays, when so many of the latter are educated, their position is worse than ever."

"Nevertheless, though their position is now again worse even than when Thomson wrote, these rural representatives of the civic sense on a small scale still exist and it is upon them that a great part of the present and future industry can be built up on indigenous Indian lines. Here is a genuine Indian associative spirit. Here, too, amongst the villages and in the rural areas are the men whom the peasants would select to manage the small rural factories, in which they themselves would be the workmen during the all-too-many present days of unemployment. Here also, in the soldiers, who have returned to their villages, are the men of mechanical knowledge who would be so helpful and needful at the start.

"As to the time lost at the rural factories, when the village workmen have to leave them and work upon their fields, we will content ourselves and end our talk with a quotation from our excellent thinker, Mr. Parr. "It may be argued that rural industry could not afford to allow its plant and management to remain idle for a third of the year, while agricultural labour is at work upon the fields. Some adjustment here is admittedly necessary but there can be no question whether the claims of management and plant should be permitted to take precedence over those of human labour now suffering from a lack of opportunity to attain even a modest standard of living. Let the plant have its holidays for overhaul and repair, and let the management take to the countryside, where they will find scope for their organizing abilities in the development of Government planned co-operative activities and rural welfare work by which rural industry itself will, in the long run, be indirectly but very definitely benefited. When industry is producing for a

localized home market, losses occasioned by periodic suspension of production and provision of storage can be adjusted in selling prices, while maintaining an economic balance due to increased purchasing power of labour and the reduction in the cost of distribution. Furthermore, prices can be protected by tariffs as in the case of sugar.

## XVI

At our next meeting my friend began by saying 'The associative spirit that arises from the large family system guided our suggestions for a ruralized industry at our last discussion, and will be the only guide to our discussion to-night on the reinstatement of the peasants'

'There is also caste,' I added

'There is also caste,' my friend agreed 'But, of caste and the large family, the large family is the older. It is the first basis upon which people's knowledge of each other is founded and adjustment to each other is assured'

'Whereas caste unites by dividing,' I said

My friend laughed 'It is odd, is it not, that the Indians should so often bring up the saying Divide and rule, as a charge against the British, when they themselves have been the world's chief exponents of this art'

'Caste certainly is the most rigid division of society ever invented,' I said 'At the same time it is the most rigid form of adhesion of groups of men together'

My friend was silent for a little while. Then he began 'I suggest, that while we have to recognize caste and the divisions it causes in the villages, we will deal no more with caste, but, in our proposals, we will consider the family and the villages only. Make them more prosperous and self-maintaining, and the education that this will bring about will get



rid of the squalid mud huts the filth and misery of the unhappy untouchables, which can be seen on the outskirts of thousands of villages. A prosperous village would the quicker become ashamed of such visible inhumanity because of its growth in neatness and cleanliness. So if we concentrate on our object, if we flow in the channel we have marked out in our previous talk we shall, I think, erect a condition in the countryside of pride of achievement, in which the divisions due to caste and outcaste will appear as objectionable to the villagers as they appear now to Europeans, even to such a friend of India as the late Mr C. F. Andrews, who was so revolted by what he called the sub-human existence of the millions of the depressed classes of rural India.

I fully agree, I intervened eagerly. Yet to restore a peasantry to a sound and national basis, the abolition of a good deal more than caste is essential. There will be more stubborn opponents than the Brahmans.

Unquestionably that is so assented my friend. But we will deal with the positive factors of a sound peasantry first. You and I have so often talked on this subject that we should by now have an inkling of what these principles are.

For the sake of clarity I proposed we should divide them into internal and external.

That we must certainly try to do went on my friend. The first social unit can be stated in terms of the past as the self-governing village system. That was the original relationship. The peasants owned the land on condition that they paid taxes in the form of produce to the King, and the King had the reciprocal duty of protecting and preserving the peasants. The King in the past had his own land to deal with as he willed, but over the land of the country he had no right of property as Mr Dvijadas Datta shows in his *Peasant Proprietorship in India*.

The first principle of a sound peasantry is peasant-ownership of the land it cultivates, and the reason for this is

obvious peasants take far more trouble with the land that is their own. By family ownership, the peasants came to know the land, as it must be known, with love. They love the land and consequently, they take the same care of the land and their tools and their animals as they do of their children. Personal ownership will always have to be the basis of intensive farming, by which food can most safely be produced. Some uses of the land, no doubt, require large-scale farming, but, speaking generally, the soil demands for its cultivation and preservation personal farming. "Trifles", Hasbach tells us, "are the very object of the small cultivator, he has everything near him and under his eye, makes use of every small advantage, cultivates every corner, has the help of his wife, and brings up his children to be the most useful the country produces. Such men serve the land as it should be served, never stinting themselves, and as absorbed in their service as any priest in his religion."

"This close relationship with the land is brought about by the village council, or *panchayat*, as it is called in India, which Munro and others sought so strenuously to preserve. I propose only to repeat a later approval of its value. It is the conclusion of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Decentralization in India*, 1909, and reads: "We are of the opinion that the foundation of any stable edifice which shall associate the people with the administration must be the village as being an area of much greater antiquity than the administrative creations such as tahsils, and one in which people are known to one another and have interests which converge on well-recognized objects."

"From the village arose the *panchayat*. It was the authority for all village affairs. The members of it are chosen, not by any open or secret ballot, but by all the villagers getting together and arguing together, and even shouting, until the five members of the *panchayat* are chosen by general consent. There are no parties and no voting, and matters

coming before the *panchayat* are settled in the same way as the election, namely by hearing evidence and opinions and then coming to a common decision. It is the family way.

The old *panchayats* dealt with all village affairs. Their meetings were public and all the villagers could attend. They had, for instance, a village schoolmaster whose position was hereditary and who was paid by a share in the village produce and a bit of land for himself. To this day as long as the *panchayat* has a share in education and the direction of school fees, education has some success, but where education is only under a higher or created authority it wanes. So also is it with Poor Relief. The village system had excellent methods of relief but it now has been grievously injured by urban influence. So also with Sanitation, Public Works including Water Works, Watch and Ward, and the Administration of Local Justice. It was Sir William Sleeman, who as long ago as 1840 in *Rambles and Recollections* pointed out that it was impossible to arrive at the truth in a British Court, whereas, it was easy for the *panchayat*. "I believe," he wrote, "that there are no people in the world from whom it is more easy to get it—the truth—in their own village communities where they state it before their relations, elders and neighbours, whose esteem is necessary to happiness and can only be obtained by adherence to the truth." The litigation of the villagers of the present day was avoided. You will remember how the peasants of Miss Emerson's village, Pachperwa, entered into what she called absurd litigation expenses for disputes about land and she assigns this avidity for land to the simple reason that the villagers are habitually underfed and land, of course, means food.

Lastly the *panchayat* was the agency in assessing with the Revenue Officers the tax the villagers had to pay.

Now we come to the very core of India, wherein we see a remarkable exemplification of Goethe's great saying

“Only that is good for a nation which comes from its own core and its own need”

Here I interrupted with the remark ‘I know what you are leading up to, namely, payment of tax in the villagers’ produce’

My friend nodded

‘Before you enter into this vital subject, I should like to point out that, according to a recent authority of high standing, this need of payment in produce is an essential of all farmers, who regard farming as an art rather than an industry I will read it out to you It is from the Earl of Portsmouth’s book *Alternative to Death*, published in 1943 The Earl writes in his fifth chapter “If any system of land is to be healthy, it must rely less and less on money payment, and more and more on mutual partnership If large estates or groups of small estates and owner-occupiers could become co-operative units, both for purchase and external needs, such as implements and, in certain cases, feeding-stuffs, and for the processing and sale of their crops, it would be possible for the tenant farmer to hold his land in return for payment in kind of a proportion of his produce This, while allowing the maximum initiative in farm management, would wed the farmer to a good rotation for the upkeep of his land and stock

Payment of rent in kind might have a definite place in the assurance of sound husbandry Payments could, and perhaps should, be asked for in the type of produce or crop which improves the land” The author then goes on to say what this produce or crop in Britain should be I may add that the Earl is a landowner, who pays careful attention himself to his land, in short, he is a practising farmer’

My friend listened with close attention to these words and sat for some time engrossed in thought Finally he said ‘This Earl is far-sighted and, of course, far more knowledgeable as a farmer than you or I Yet nothing could surprise me more than that a farmer, living in a land where farming as a

money making business is so firmly established as it is in England, should be one with us in the fundamental doctrine of payment in produce. It is very remarkable and as hopeful as it is remarkable. It certainly strengthens our plea in a most acceptable manner

Now I must continue he went on with our Indian peasants, who already possesses traditionally what your author calls "mutual partnership

Payment in produce is a payment that peasants understand. It is a payment in something which they themselves produce under their own eyes and with their own and their families hands, whereas payment in money they do *not* understand, because its roots are elsewhere and not in their own fields. No-one can dispute this fundamental fact. Baden-Powell in his *Short Account of Land Revenue* 1907 said that it escapes any complicated calculations of the cultivator's profit, or cost of production, or about the relative value of the land, or the productiveness of the season."

It does this, of course, by being a proportion of the produce of the year itself and, when there was a famine year there may be nothing to divide and revenue relief followed automatically. Moreover the tax was a tax on the farmer's active interest, for he benefited by good crops, not poor ones

Akbar it seems introduced payment in money but he left the choice of payment in money or in produce to the tax payers. Still, payment in money was introduced and as we know eventually became customary. As far as I know payment in kind now occurs only in a few Native States

This leads us to a brief review of the peasants relation to money. Clearly since Akbar allowed a payment in money the peasants must have had money in those days. I know little or nothing about it and must leave it at that. But the character of the money of that time was definite enough. It was durable. It was made from gold silver or baser metals, and

its character of durability was its recommendation to all Indians, rich and poor. It was something to store against what in England we call a rainy day, but in India is a dry monsoon. Metal was stored on a very large scale in India. The Roman writer, Pliny, in the first century A D, called India "a veritable sink of the precious metals", and a writer in *Blackwood* in 1928, wrote "India's total absorption throughout the 430 years (from the discovery of the sea-route to India) to date has been 553 million sterling in gold and 4,556 million sterling worth of silver." The amount absorbed before the discovery of the sea-route, he adds, must be immense, but cannot be calculated.

'So, when Bernier, the French traveller, some three centuries ago was amazed at the incredible quantities of women's ornaments and gold and silver-threaded dress, men's turbans and the private jewels and State jewels, it was not so much at finery that he was looking, as at stored wealth. The wealth was not spent, except in emergency, but was handed on from generation to generation.

'The humble peasants did not get a large share of this wealth, but they accumulated what they could in armlets and anklets for their women and in coin, which they buried. At times of famine or other misfortune, they dug up their coins and turned their women's ornaments into coin, by having them weighed before them by the village financial functionary who had them minted, but gave cash down for them. With this coin the peasants bought what they needed from outside. So the villagers were able to supply their own coins and liquidate a crisis by issuing more money, an example, I might add, which Sweden followed so successfully in the recent world crisis of the early 'thirties.

'But, by Act VIII of 1893, the British Indian Government abolished this right of the peasants to mint their metals. We need not go into the temporary reasons for this, the fact must suffice us.

Moreover some years before this Act, suits for village debts to the *sowcars* were taken out of the hands of the *panchyats* and writes Sir Malcolm Darling in *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* handed over to the civil courts presided over by professional judges, called *munsifs* men trained in the strictest sense of the law for the most part born in the town, knowing little of the village and often allied with the moneylender by caste if not by actual relationship. The rigid application of the law which ensued put the ignorant peasant entirely at the mercy of his creditor.

So the *sowcars* or moneylenders, once village functionaries dealing with the peasants according to what the *panchyats* considered right and reasonable, became privileged persons under the British Indian Law and consequently of course the masters of the improvident villagers. Hence the *kamlas* of the Royal Agricultural Commissioners, bond servants of their master hence the strangling of Indian peasants by debt that is too well known for further mention now.

My friend looked to the eastern sky

That is enough for to-night, I think I must not rob you of your sleep, he said

Pray continue I urged To-morrow is Sunday and I can lie abed if I wish. I should much like to hear your summary.

That should not take long returned my friend, for it really only amounts to restoring certain rights to the peasants. They are, in the order we have taken them, the right to a share in the production of the industrial needs of the country side. That we discussed in the talk preceding this one. The villagers' industries have been destroyed by machine made goods manufactured in towns and often towns of other countries, and a share in the proposed new industrialization of India is the villagers' right, as a part of their reinstatement.

In this present talk we have discussed peasant-ownership of land That has to be restored and I for one should not refrain from severity in the case of lands taken over in pay

ment of debt Surely there is something to pay back in return for the enormous *over-payment* of debts on the part of the peasants We know what the *Kamias* in *law* owe their masters, but do we know what in *life* the masters owe the *Kamias*?

‘Then comes the restoration of the *panchyats* and their functions, lastly, the restoration of the peasants’ money, and right to coin money If there are not enough mints it is not hard to create more That, indeed, seems to bring our review of the internal conditions of the Indian peasants to an end We have yet to deal with the external, the modern version of the King’s duties in the past, which will be the subject of our next talk ’



## XVII

13

**T**o-night, began my friend we have to discuss the external aspect of the peasants of India, namely the relation of Authority to them.

I propose to begin with a remarkable statement upon this aspect. It is the *Memorandum* presented by the Punjab Zamindars Association to the Statutory Commission of 1930 and is one of the few and possibly the only Indian Agrarian Memorandum presented to it.

That Commission appointed by Parliament, was a very peculiar and subjective one for an agricultural subcontinent. There were seven members, only two of whom had anything approaching to interests in the countryside of their own country. The Chairman, Sir John Simon was an expert in British political legality there was a distinguished urban journalist there were two members of the Labour Party itself the latest development of British urban parliamentarianism. Capable though the members were in their own spheres, in their subjectivity and their lack of objective understanding of the mass of the Indian people, they were destined to be the bunglers in State affairs, whom Goethe particularly hated because from them, as he said, nothing but ill comes to thousands and millions.

The *Memorandum* of the Zamindars Association strove to instruct them as to the attitude of modern Authority to

the Indian agrarians and its unhappy results. But they strove in vain. The Commissioners' Report practically ignored the Indian farmers. I ask you, for example, to look for a fitting description of the withering effect of the legalized moneylenders upon the Indian agrarians. The moneylenders do not even figure in the Index. Except for a brief reference to them in i, 343, extraordinary in itself in that it is without comment, there is no mention of them. So, too, with regard to education, there is only a brief and useless reference to its agrarian aspect. Education for farming was outside the mental scope of the Commissioners. So also was the adequate political representation of the law-abiding backbone of India, as Thomson calls the heads of the villages and the villagers. No, their attention was riveted to the politically clamorous, the women, and the depressed classes. From the point of view of the mass of the Indian people, the *Report* was a mere piece of forensic and political jugglery. This, however, was not their fault. They had no ears for the agriculturists, and, as Thoreau said, "It takes two to speak the truth, one to speak and the other to hear."

'The Punjab Zamindars foresaw this danger and strove to avert it by their *Memorandum*. Let me, therefore, read some extracts from this notable document. It was respectful, as it had to be to the seven members chosen by the Parliament of Britain—far more so than I have been, you will say—but that did not detract from its force.

'Here are some of the words of the *Memorandum*. "This Association would impress on the Statutory Commission with all possible emphasis, that the urban middle-class, which is akin to and includes the moneylending class, has no sympathy with the agricultural classes whatever, and that the interests of the two classes are diametrically opposed to each other. The middle class, with the academical education which they have received, look down upon the agriculturists as being only good enough to plough land, to produce food,

supply the revenues, act as cannon fodder and to be exploited in every way conceivable. Although the urban middle class have recently proposed universal suffrage, it is only to create a huge irresponsible electorate, whom in their poverty ignorance and immense numbers they expect to keep under their influence. In India the power of the moneylenders is universal and supreme.

The educational policy of Government whereby educational facilities were limited to the towns, has favoured this class they have monopolized the Indian press they are carrying on propaganda in England and all over the world pretending to be the spokesmen of India. Their aims are to rule India and to bring every other class, including the Indian Princes, under their dominion to obtain and keep a monopoly of Government appointments to impose almost the whole burden of taxation on the agricultural classes and to obtain possession of the land by repealing all laws that are protective of Zamindars against usury and sequestration.

The Government of India has become an urbanized Government, despite the appointment of our popular Viceroy and has completely lost touch with the agricultural population. Behind the urbanized Government of India stands the urbanized British Parliament, that is even unfair to the agriculturists of its own country and to inquire into the reforms necessary to India is the Statutory Commission composed of the representatives of the urbanized British Parliament.

Here my friend ceased reading and rising to his feet in a mood of great excitement, paced to and fro while he poured forth these words. There lies the supreme blunder of the modern British, not only in India but in other parts of the Empire they have forgotten the land and its peasantry. Thereby they are likely to lose India, and to effect much disaster amidst agriculture in the lands they rule. British

Authority thought it must establish a Government of India, whereas we know its plain duty was to re-establish the people of India, whom it had thrust into the jaws of the money-lenders and life-suckers, and, when a Government does this, whatever be its public professions, it makes the peasants nothing in the State, they are a peasantry in thrall'

My friend resumed his seat and sat for some minutes in gloomy silence

'I am depressed', he finally went on, 'because I do not see any human, associative link between Authority and the servers of the land. Yet never did such a link seem more necessary. There is so much that Authority has to do for the soil and the peasants. Apart from the protection of the farmers, which we discussed in our last talk, there is the provision of the soil with more manure, with regulated water, its protection against erosion, and, with these, improved methods of cultivation

'But as the *Memorandum* states, there is a great gulf between the educated and the farmers, and those who have knowledge of the methods by which the above needs can be served, are unfortunately on the wrong side of the gulf. That was not the case in the relations of Authority and the people in the past. In the past there were the British District Officers, who formed the necessary human link

'Munro, once more, in his superb *Minutes*—the Munro of whom Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, the Editor of the *Minutes*, said "There were giants in the days of the old Company *Sahib*, and amongst them Sir Thomas Munro was a head and shoulders taller than his brother giants"—this Munro laid down the following principles, which I will here read to you. "It ought to be our aim", he wrote upon the importance of cultivating beneficial familiarity between the young officers of the Company and the people, "to give to the young servants the best opinion of the natives, in order that they may be better qualified to govern them hereafter

We can never be qualified to govern those against whom we are prejudiced. If we entertain a prejudice at all, it ought rather to be in their favour than against them. We ought to know their character but especially the favourable side of it for if we only know the unfavourable, it will beget contempt and harshness on the one part and discontent on the other. The custom of appointing young men as soon as they leave college, to be Registrars to *Zillah*" (that is District or Collectors") "Courts is calculated rather to produce than obviate this evil. When a young man is transferred from College to the Office of the *Zillah* Registrar he finds himself at once invested with judicial functions. He learns forms before he learns things. He becomes full of the respect due to the Court, but knows nothing of the people. He is placed too high above them to have any general intercourse with them. He has little opportunity of seeing them except in Court. He sees only the worst part of them, and under the worst shapes. He sees them as plaintiff and defendant, exasperated against each other or as criminals and the unfavourable opinion with which he too often at first enters among them, in place of being removed by experience, is every day strengthened and increased. In the revenue department (to which my friend added the words in which a young official had to tour the countryside and go into the villages") he has an almost boundless field from which he may draw at pleasure his knowledge of the people. As he has it in his power at some time or other to show kindness to them all in settling their differences, in occasional indulgence in their rents, in facilitating the performance of their ceremonies, and many other ways and as he sees them without official forms or restraint, they come to him freely not only on the public but often on their private concerns."

Here, then over a century ago said my friend are laid down the true relation that is needed to link Authority with

the people Now let us turn back to the Punjab Zamindars' *Memorandum* for a further statement upon the relation of urban and agricultural "Clash as urban and agricultural do in Great Britain, the United States, and other countries, the cleavage between these interests in India is far greater than in any other country in the world, owing to the people in India always having followed hereditary occupations, which has caused them through the ages to develop into two widely divergent groups" These two groups', went on my friend, are the Something and the Nothing, or the Something only in the sense that it may be exploited

'This sense of being separate and superior is far more prevalent amongst the Indian officials than it is amongst the British, for the reason, which the *Memorandum* states The British, on the contrary, have the civic sense and it is that which gives many of them a rare value in linking Authority with the people If the Government of India is to be one for the people, this should not be forgotten even at this late hour

Lt-Colonel Thomson, towards the close of his book *The Silent India*, 1913, puts this precious truth well as the following extracts show "If the present little work has any purpose", he writes of his book, "it is to suggest the expediency of, so far as is compatible with existing conditions, reverting to the old system of making the personal element the principal factor in the local administration of India, and by releasing District Officers as far as possible from clerical and routine duties, leaving them time and leisure to mingle with the people in their homes It goes without saying that such officers should be most carefully selected It ordinarily takes years for a European to learn to think as Indians think It is given to some men to do this almost instinctively—others never acquire the faculty It seems to be far less a question of intellectual attainments than of personal character The watchword for rulers in India

to-day it is submitted, is to keep in touch with the masses—not the noisy minority in the towns, but the simple voiceless millions who live in silent India. The Collector lived for more than half the year literally among the people. The white sheen of his tents was the sign that the meanest ryot could plead his cause, or lay his grievance, before the great *Sirkar* (Government) itself—for to him the Head of the district was the Government. Only Anglo-Indians know how greatly such a privilege is valued in the East. He spoke, and really understood, the *patols* of the rural classes he saw with his own eyes where revenue assessments could be justly enhanced or reduced he knew the family histories of the great landowners with whom he rode and shot he settled many quarrels and arrested much mischievous litigation with wise advice and in numerous ways brought home to the simple folk the fact that the *Sirkar* was not only a definite entity but also their friend What used to impress the writer (in the village talk) was that the office of the eulogured individual was hardly ever mentioned It was the *man* they followed—as they would given the opportunity again

Thomson would have the same principles guide the choice of the Indian colleagues of their British brethren There are he says in *The Real Indian People* 1914 a number of competent rural Indians of character and intelligence, who for some reason or other have failed to compete with the nimble-witted students of the towns, but are known and respected for their trustworthiness, sympathy and practical ability by the people of the countryside, and he dreads and rightly dreads the young students who attain to governmental positions by shining in examinations for literary ability

We have now reached the type of men we require for the associative service of a future rural reconstruction We have however to remember that few of them, and none of them eventually would be British The question then arises How

would they be selected? We have the answer in what I have just said. These men are known and respected for their trustworthiness and ability by the people of the countryside, in other words, they would be the men who would be chosen if the choice was left to the villagers and farmers. I would, therefore, leave their selection to the *panchayats* and other organizations of the country people themselves.

‘And what would their job be? It would be to link up the technical men of Authority with the villagers of India. There would be a large number of technical men, such as agricultural experts, irrigation engineers, electrical engineers, anti-erosion engineers, foresters, experts in the turning of urban and village wastes into effective manure, and other obligations of Authority to the people. All these experts, at present, are on the wrong side of the gulf to that of the people, and the duty of the associative service would be to bridge the gulf and make the people understand what it is advisable for them to understand of the experts’ work.

‘As an example, let us take the work of the group of experts under the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. I have made the only approach to them which a layman can, I have subscribed to and read their monthly publication *Indian Farming*. It is a well set-up magazine with excellent articles. But, with the exception of such an article as that of Mr. Parr’s, the articles seem to have no relation whatsoever to the ryots and villagers. The magazine is itself a mass of ably written fragmentations which seem to lack entirely any associative link with the mass of the farmers.

It is the same with the present experts engaged on the making of manure for the farm out of town wastes under the able guidance of Dr. C. N. Acharya. Dr. Acharya in *Miscellaneous Bulletin No. 60*, quotes the ten-yearly census figures from 1901 to 1941. He shows us that the town population has increased from 68 millions in 1901 to 125 millions in 1941 and anticipates 150 millions in 1951, a substantial



number of extra mouths to feed. He then calculates that for an urban population of 125 millions, there are 16 million tons of waste that could be turned into manure for the fields and notes how little of it is actually being used. Consequently he sees a grave danger of food shortage and famine for this and other reasons, such as the number of useless cattle the land has to support and the large use of cow-dung by the peasants for fuel, and he adds a grave warning in these words "The true significance of this waste is realized when one considers that the total manurial value of our urban refuse, as given in Table III represents material that has been directly or indirectly removed from our agricultural area. In view of the rapid rate at which our urban population is increasing, it would be suicidal for our agriculture to allow the drain shown in Table III to continue unchecked for another 50 or 100 years, which would mean a rapid deterioration of the fertility level and the productive capacity of the soil."

Yet the only association with the agriculturists went on my friend, that this expert can mention is the cash nexus, in other words, that the municipalities should be able to sell the manure to farmers, and especially neighbouring farmers so that transit expenses would not enhance the price inordinately. He cannot state, I suppose without danger of being accused of impossible exaggeration, that this waste manure is the right of the country's soil and should be given to it as equipment against future famine, as equipment is given to soldiers against future war.

It is the same with Sir Herbert Howard's plan for post-war forestry. He visualizes an increase of forestry to provide peasants with fuel and calculates that in twenty years time the plan would provide wood for the peasantry and release enough cow-dung now burnt, for fifteen per cent of the cultivated land. Yet he too is not able to state the right of the peasants to fuel, if famine is to be avoided.

‘It is the same with other experts, such as those at present widely separated from the humble rural folk, namely the engineers who have been inspired by the success of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States of America. But the Tennessee Valley Authority brought the inhabitants of the Valley into their scheme from the outset and especially the poverty-stricken farmers by means of 20,000 demonstration farms. They brought the experts to the people. The experts lived amongst the people and spoke to them “in a tongue that is universal”, said the Chairman, Mr. Lilienthal, “a language of *things close to the people*—soil fertility, forests, electricity, phosphates, factories, minerals, rivers” They spoke, therefore, of the Land as it is to the people and not of the Motherland as the politicians speak. The people responded, and, from the days of despair, they entered into times of pride in the achievements of the Valley. Hence, I assert that, of all services that are necessary to the future of India, the service of an associative service between Authority and the people, such as I have outlined, is the most essential.’

My friend rose. ‘That is enough for to-night,’ he said. ‘May you sleep well.’

‘I always do,’ said I.

‘I, also,’ acquiesced my friend, with a smile. ‘It is the one way of getting peace into one’s life in these turbulent days. It must be most trying to have fractious dreams.’

‘I have never experienced them,’ I said.

‘Nor I,’ he added, and we both laughed with mutual self-satisfaction.

## XVIII

To-night's talk will be, I think, our last, my friend began. We have described our objects and the service required for their fulfilment. To-night we have to discuss where they could best be attained. You will, no doubt, yourself have guessed where I would choose homes for them.

I think I could, I replied. You have insisted so strongly on the preservation of the Indian character in the present revolutionary time that my answer is the Native States.

Your answer is correct, responded my friend. Within the Native States, the roots of tradition are still deep enough to hold the people amidst the gusts and passions of political change. But, before I take up the subject of the particular suitability of the Indian States, I want to try and make clear what actually this great change is in its relation to the soil.

The change that has overtaken and is now absorbing the political vision of educated Indians, under the term of self government, is the entry into the world of science, trade, and factory of a free, and not bound economic India. This vision of peoples becoming free, economic entities or nations is comparatively modern. When peoples were dominantly agricultural economically they did not bother about being nations. Both in Europe and India, they were under ruling families and they carried on their village lives without con

cerning themselves much about their rulers and not at all about national politics. In Europe, only in an island like Britain or the semi-island of Holland, was there anything like a nation, and these two countries were the parents of economic nationality. All the rest of Europe was shared out amongst the ruling families or European Kshatriyas.

‘With the discovery of the sea-route to India and the Far East, world trade, carried by ships in place of caravans, developed, and little by little a rich manufacturing and trading class, with their municipal form of government, showed themselves as rivals of the rule of princes and landed aristocracies. The Dutch merchants and middle-class were the first to rebel against paternal government. They were followed by the English and the French. The discovery of machines and practical science added enormously to the power of trade, and modern countries revealed themselves in the new form of economical associations or nations.

‘It is this new civilization of trade and manufacture that the British built up in India in the nineteenth century. A wealthy class of bourgeois or middle-class Indians came into being, rivals both to the British wealthy bourgeois and to the Indian landed aristocracy. They had no traditions of the land and cared nothing for it except as private property or as a source of products, which could be traded.

‘In India the two classes of wealthy merchants and landed aristocracy did not combine. They remained as rivals to each other, the landowners losing and the traders and financiers constantly gaining in power. Finally the success of trade, and yet more of finance, demarcated the age as one of economic nationalism and urban dominance over the countryside.

‘This is the explanation of the modern Indian movement, the economic meaning of its new and revolutionary nationalism, the ascendancy of its towns and the determination of the wealthy bourgeois and their political party of Con-

gress to see that the political power becomes theirs and that the system of paternal government in the Native States be subordinated or brought to an end

Their attitude to the Muslim quarter of the population is dictated by the same subconscious thought, and, in spite of the fact that the Islamic culture, with its abolition of debt its sanctity of the soil and of labour its rural education and local self government, and its technicians and experts trained in engineering, irrigation, meteorology agricultural and horticultural research working in friendly equality with the farmers, built up the finest agricultural basis to states that the world, outside the Far East, has ever witnessed they the trading and manufacturing class, display the same hostility to the Muslims and the same intention to keep them in their present condition of economic inferiority Congress and its masters care nothing for this great culture, and the possibility that, were the Muslims free to follow out and develop the Islamic principles, the result might be states of agricultural prosperity of great advantage to the whole of India, has no effect upon them

India then is, it appears, likely to place industry and trade so much in the forefront that the agriculturists have no chance to win their freedom. They will be, of course, in large, the largest body of recipients of the economic, national freedom, but they will *not* they will *not* I repeat, receive their economic, agricultural freedom.

Only one thing will awaken the new nationalists to the prior needs of the soil, and that one thing is the soil itself Almost all countries of economic, national freedom have brought the soil into a condition so dangerous as to threaten them with shortage of food poor quality food famine and the devastation of human life They have overworked under estimated and maltreated the soil, and the soil almost secretly has replied in its own very special way

To put it vulgarly the soil does not care a damn about

mankind Mankind is only the last, and by far the most troublesome, form of being, to which it gives life And, when it is wrongly treated by man, when it is squeezed to yield money, when it is worked till it is exhausted, it quietly goes out of business It is men, then, who suffer, men who become extinct, as they have already become extinct in the historic deserts they have caused The soil, meanwhile, sets about reforming itself in a long space of years—a mere ten thousand years for a foot of soil to form from the underlying rock according to the American Professor T. C Chamberlin —If men were driven from the earth by their maltreatment of the soil as Professor Shaler foretold in 1896, it is possible that they could only return as they came, by the slow process of evolution •

‘Though the devastation of the soil wrought by men in history is known, though it is known that the deserts of the world have been man-made, yet to-day men luxuriate in the sins of their forefathers at a speed far exceeding that of any other period of their history, and at a like speed, the soil replies by rejecting or impoverishing them as its children It goes out of its business of creating life and becomes barren The U S A , Canada, much of South America, the West Indies, large areas in Europe, northern, equatorial, east and south Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, all bear witness to the folly with which men of economic nationalism treat the soil This is the rebellion of the soil, which underlies the ubiquitous human rebellion of this present time

‘The civilization of trade and manufacture, in its first great advances, had a unique advantage over present-day India, and that was the agricultural wealth that the virgin soil of North and South America and Australasia offered, indeed, one may say this civilization has only been able to develop to its present astonishing stage by the expenditure of this great store of soil-fertility

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Science has invented countless ways by which the products of the soil have been put at the disposal of the greatly increased manufacturing and trading populations. But India is not only entering into independent, economical nationalism at a time when the surplus products of other lands are rapidly decreasing, but her own soil is at a very low level of fertility. Historically she has not been generous to the soil; she has never given a high standing to its service, as both Islam and Confucianism have done; and now, at this critical time, when her entry into industry has given an enormous impulse to her population, she has to offer a soil most of which, said the Agricultural Adviser to the Government of India, has been under cultivation for hundreds of years, and had reached its maximum impoverishment many years ago."

My friend was silent for a few minutes before resuming his discourse with the words:

Within this great change so disturbing to the servants of the soil, there is still a third of India, mostly hilly and even mountainous and therefore less suitable for trade than the valleys of her great rivers, where modernism is developing in conjunction with and not rivalling the historic character of India. There are the numerous Native States, all of which, large and small, are run on the same lines of Ruler, Minister and People.

Eighty years ago the value of the intrinsic Indian character of these States struck the imagination of the great thinker and statesman the Marquis of Salisbury. Before the death of his father he was Lord Cranborne and a member of the House of Commons. On the 24th of May 1867 he startled the House with a penetrating question, and this was what he asked: "Whether a number of small well governed Native States would not be more conducive to the political and moral advancement of these people than the British Government. He did not deny the British mission to civilize but he

certainly demurred against the wholesale condemnation of the native system, which, though it would be intolerable to a people of British habit, nevertheless, having grown up amongst the people subject to it, had a fitness and geniality, which compensated in some degree for the material evils which its rudeness often induced."

"The consequence of this question of Lord Cranborne was an inquiry conducted by the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, and *The Correspondence Respecting British and Native Systems of Government* circulated in the House of Commons in the following year. This led to a far better, and, in fact, more effective, appreciation of the Indian System on the part of British Authority. This appreciation continued, and it is still fortunately acknowledged, in spite of the vocal hostility to it on the part of the Indian press. It received a notable acknowledgement as recently as the 17th of January 1946, when Lord Wavell, addressing the Indian Princes, said "The record of some States in the art of civil government is already most distinguished. In no part of India is administration and the welfare of the people better secured than in some of the States."

"The advantages of the States for such proposals as ours were well voiced by Sir Sydney Low in his small book *The Indian States* published in 1929. Sir Sydney declared first that "the ancient usages and inherited practices of the Indian States have an intrinsic value of their own, and are certainly not to be thrown over lightly for some shoddy imitation of western parliamentarianism", and he then went on to some of the advantages of this intrinsic value, and amongst them that of introducing suitable measures in government, since, as he puts it, "The States have opportunities in such matters which the Central Government lacks. It is difficult to frame a remedial measure which must be applied at once to the whole 250,000,000 of British India. A State durbar can try out the experiment, in its own limited

area and among the small population with which it is in intimate contact, with a better chance of success."

You will now realize why it is that I consider some of the Native States as peculiarly favourable to a modern development of India primarily based upon the land. I have held this view for many years, and about the same time as the publicity of Sir Sydney Low's advocacy I also advocated it to the Conservative and Unionist Parliamentary Committee. My pamphlet had some success, which, however, was only transitory because a general election changed the personnel of the House of Commons. I have never diverged from that view.

My first conviction that it was the small rather than the large state, which could save its soil and its peasantry from the uprooting effects of the present era, was brought about by a small European State, that of Denmark, and you must forgive me, if I now transfer your attention from the Indian States to that country.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the cheap wheat imported into Europe from America and the Argentine had a deplorable effect upon the European grain growers, including the Danish farmers, whose trade in wheat, especially with its neighbouring country Germany gave Denmark its share in the goods produced by the new industrialism. At that time the Danish agriculture was carried out upon large estates. The importation of foodstuffs from overseas brought all dependent upon the land to the verge of starvation.

In face of this catastrophe the royal house and the professional classes were, for the time being, paralysed, but the peasants, with the devotion which that class has for the soil and the practical shrewdness which arises therefrom, revealed to the Government the way of escape. Denmark must save itself, and so they, the peasants, grouping together set about reforming their agriculture. They planned their farms for the feeding of themselves and their fellow-countrymen.

and they ignored the outer world, its markets and its politics. They turned to an agriculture of intensive, small-scale production, and locally, and eventually through the Government generally, they changed from farming by large estates to the re-creation of a peasant-family-ownership of the soil.

‘For this to be successful, they organized their own system of education especially in all things agricultural, and they formed their own marketing associations for exchanging their surplus products for manufactured goods, for the upkeep of their schools, for insurance against poor harvests and all the equipage, which co-operation can effect. They were so successful in their local management, that little by little they became an active partner in the Danish Parliament and finally the chief power in that assembly. From a condition of misery and starvation, in forty years they raised Denmark to the most contented state in the world with an unrivalled, if moderate, general level of prosperity.

‘That is what a small self-contained country did by the restoration of a free peasantry. It is a type of restoration peculiarly suitable to small areas. Plans of reformation in huge areas are, as Low said, far more difficult to carry out, and are apt to be of the type that is dangerous to instead of preservative of the peasants and their intimate, intensive service of the soil. This danger has been expressed by none better than by a very great British agriculturist, the late Lord Ernle, who, in his book *English Farming, Past and Present*, 1922, wrote “If agricultural reform fall only into the hands of reforming theorists intent on repeating the time-honoured mistake of applying to the agricultural problems remedies which are only applicable, if at all, to industrial and urban difficulties, to all classes the consequences threaten to be disastrous, and most of all to agricultural labourers.”

‘That authoritative voice, as a warning to those who are

occupied with the building up of a new Indian nationalism, might well bring my discourses to an end. I have, however to face an objection, which I feel is at this moment busying your mind. It is that with which we have so often dealt, namely the danger of imitation.

My friend paused and looked questioningly into my face.

Am I right? he asked

Yes. That objection did occur to me when you were speaking,' I replied

*The answer is that small agricultural kingdoms are so alike that their intrinsic similarity annuls imitation. The Kingdom of Denmark with its Ruler its Minister its men of landed wealth, its unfree peasantry and its modern environment, was essentially similar to the Indian States. And some of these States, as Lord Wavell testifies, have already secured the welfare of the people more successfully than has any other part of India. A number of such States scattered throughout India, would be of incalculable value in the precarious period of building up a free, economic nationalism. They would play a vital part in regeneration for they would open to Indian leaders sorely harassed by the difficulties of dealing with the depressed agricultural majority the way to the basis of the independent motherland upon the welfare of the soil and of them that labour upon it. That is my last word*

We both rose and as my friend extended his hand to bid me good night, he said 'I have a good joke ready for you. It is this. Let us hope the leaders will replace their suspicions and quarrels by study

For a moment I puzzled myself as to where the joke lay while he looked at me with a preparatory wrinkling of his face.

Study what? I asked

Your book, he replied and broke into one of his resounding laughs. I realized the reason. He did not wish me

to deliver the speech of effusive thanks which I had prepared for him and which he had the right to expect

‘A good joke,’ he repeated, smiling affectionately at me  
‘You must come again soon and we will give ourselves to an evening of gossip Good night, my boy, good night’

With a brief ‘Thank you’, and a warm pressure of his hand, I turned and walked home in the first glimmer of a new day



